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A MACROHISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY ON THE IDEA OF EAST AND WEST FROM HERODOTUS TO EDWARD SAID

by

PROFESSOR DAVID KOPF,
Department of History, University of Minnesota

The Encounter Between East and West in Myth and History

The idea or myth of encounter between an Orient and an Occident has been a major theme in macrohistory. Unfortunately, the theme has seldom been treated autonomously in an historigraphical sense or as the history of the idea of East and West in historical writings. For centuries, historians and historical popularizers have been so emotionally involved in their allegations about the "Orient", "Orientals" and "Orientalism", for example, that they have rarely, if at all, detached the subject from their assumptions about race, religion, social evolution and the scale of civilization. From our own more liberated perspective of comparative history, it is astonishing how the great thinkers of the past were, on the matter of East and West, blind to the quality and degree of influence on their thought by the nation and time in which they lived.

With the rise of new nations in the East, accompanied by renaissances which have justified their integrity as cultures, the theme of Orient and Occident has moved into a new dimension of encounter. The older idea has consistently been exposed as a myth propagated by Westerners imbued with an exaggerated sense of cultural self-importance and global dominance. Has the shift in power differential prompted the Asian intelligentsia to conceive a radically new approach to the older polarity? Or do we find it in its familiar Procrustean bed of partisan politics and rank ethnocentrism? Has Rudyard Kipling simply been displaced by Edward Said?

In the following pages, I make a modest but determined effort to explore the landscape of the East-West heritage in the deep dark waters of our historical past. There is not the slightest intention, in this brief essay, to give a comprehensive history of the idea in historical literature. The project is, no doubt, a commendable undertaking. But the purpose, here, is to offer macrohistorians and other kinds of comparativists, an introductory analytical survey of the encounter by an historian of Asia who has studied the problem comprehensively for at least fifteen years.

The Uses of the Idea as Myth from Herodotus to Kipling

Most discussions on the origin of the East and West dichotomy have begun with Herodotus (484 to 425 B. C.). In his *Histories*, the encounter was between Greece, which represented Europe, and Persia which represented Asia. Herodotus, himself, never went beyond these two geopolitical and civilizational structures. He had little to say about India and nothing to say about China.

But later generations of Western intellectuals had a good deal to say about Herodotus on the subject of what divided East from West.[a] They found or read into his largely descriptive prose the genesis of an idea that Greek civic virtue was sharply in contrast to Oriental despotism.[b] On the other hand, some modern historians blame Herodotus and Aristotle, among the Greeks, for inventing these dubious claims about their own superiority.[c] Other historians attribute the myth of East and West to Herodotus and his lively

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[a] For an excellent example of this in the precise context of East-West encounter, see C. N. Parkinson, *East and West* (New York: Mentor Book, 1965), pp. 53-56.

[b] For a complete list of Greek virtues supposedly unique to themselves, see Parkinson, *East and West*, pp. 57-68.

[c] For Jawaharlal Nehru, an Indian freedom fighter who wrote a world history in a British prison, the superiority of Greek culture which Herodotus "referred to" was based on a sense of individual freedom which when practised, made the Greeks supermen. J. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 17.

imagination which too often was substituted for historical accuracy.[d] William Lockwood has pointed out that "Arnold Toynbee dismisses the whole dichotomy between Asia and Europe as nothing but a myth invented by Herodotus, who claimed that the Persians made war on the Greeks to avenge Troy (which they never heard of)."[1]

Nevertheless, as Toynbee was only too well aware, from Herodotus to our own century, countless generations of historians rarely approached Eurasia as a unity, preferring instead to view Asia and Europe as two diametrically opposed systems. In large part, no doubt, this persistent attitude of a polarized world order was a reflection of a never-ending military struggle between Europeans, on the one hand, and Parthians, Sassanids, Arabs and Ottomans, on the other.

But in terms of intercivilizational encounter, it is not too clear how and why great ideas or great men, for instance, became the historic property of Occident or Orient. Somehow, Alexander became a Western hero and Hellenization the precursor of contemporary Westernization.[e] Bactria, a successor state to Alexander's empire, has been treated by historians as a Western outpost on India's northwest frontier ;[2] the Kushanas who carried the Bactrian heritage to its ultimate development, also on India's northwest frontier, are considered Orientals.[f] Buddha and Christ had so much in common as charismatic leaders of salvation ideologies, that their sacred biographies are almost identical in places.[3]. Also, it is impossible to this very day to know who borrowed what from

[d] It is fashionable, today, to use Herodotus as a source but cautiously and in conjunction with other sources. William McNeill's judgment is among the most balanced I have seen. He reprimands Herodotus for exaggerating the contrast between Greeks and Persians and for his tendency to be vague and confusing at times. Nevertheless, McNeill concludes about "the interpretation of facts" by Herodotus that "despite its transparent bias, it still dominates scholarship." W. H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West : A History of the Human Community* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 202, 256n, 268.

[e] For the classic text on Hellenism, see W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* (New York : Meridian Books, 1966).

[f] The subject is thoroughly discussed in *B.* Gafurov, et al., *Kushan Studies in U. S. S. R.* (Calcutta : Indian Studies, 1970).

whom. Moreover, Buddhism and Christianity had much in common concerning monasticism and other-worldliness. And yet, Christianity had been appropriated as "Western", Buddhism as "Oriental."[g]

One must be reminded that these were not geographical comparisons but value judgments on what were held to be two distinctly different civilizational monoliths. It mattered little to the Western historians, professional and popular, that Islam was closely akin to the Judeo-Christian tradition, that Rome actually survived until the mid-fifteenth century as Byzantine, that China was more technologically advanced than Europe until the Industrial Age, or that Indo-Europeans in Iran and India were linguistically and ethnically derived from the same tribal cluster as were the Greeks, Romans and Germans.

My own impression is that this Berlin Wall of East-West encounter was constructed after the establishment of Western dominance in Asia. It was built on a foundation of implicit assumptions on the Orient and built from an ever increasing supply of stereotypical images of "Asiatick" cultures. I am not suggesting that there were not many cases of authentic contributions by sympathetic European scholars to Asian studies or that all the stereotypes by Western intellectuals on Asia were necessarily negative. The history of pre-Muslim Hindu and Buddhist civilizations in India may never have been rediscovered but for the work of British Orientalists such as William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke, H. H. Wilson and James Prinsep.[h] There were also the Voltaires and Schopenhauers who built their favorable misconceptions of the East on positive stereotypes.[i]

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[g] See Radhakrishnan's excellent discussion of this in S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (New York : Galaxy Book, 1959), pp. 186-7.

[h] For a monograph on British Orientalism, see D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley : University of California, 1969).

[i] Voltaire's writings on Asia include *Fragments on some Revolutions in and on the death of Count de Lalli* (1773) : his *Essay on the Customs and the spirit of the nations* (1765) which has several long sections on India ; and his *History of the Age of Louis XIV* which contains much material on seventeenth century Europe and Asia. Schopenhauer's references to Buddhism can be found in his *The World as Will and Idea.*

The fact is that by the late nineteenth century when Western imperalism had reached its highest point of far—reaching power and dominance in the world, the idea of East-West encounter had become one of those sacred myths which no comparative historian would dare challenge. The question is whether there were many dispassionate and honest comparativists about in European intellectual circles who were not true believers in Western superiority. According to Alex Aronson who has done a thorough study of this very problem during this very period, the most gifted European intellectuals continually "made statements of a most misleading kind about the supposed relationship between East and West."[4] The following quotation, caustic but true, deserves careful consideration because it deals with an aspect of Western thought too often ignored in Western intellectual thinking :

> An instance ... is Maeterlink's famous statement about the Eastern and the Western lobe in man's mental makeup ... The Western lobe produces reason, science, consciousness ; the other secretes intuition, religion, the subconscious. ... It is out of such an attitude that arise those amazing schemes, built up with all the pedantry of European scholarship, concerning the racial superiority of the 'Aryans', as in Gobineau, the superiority of the 'Teutons', as in H. S. Chamberlain, the 'senility' of Indian civilization, as in Hegel, or of Buddhism, as in Spengler ... Once their thesis was established, all they had to do was to apply it, point by point, to what they considered to be 'reality'. Their ignorance which at times was appalling, could always be hidden behind a veil of cynical condescension masquerading as scholarship. ...[5]

Aronson has little to say about the dozens of outstanding European scholars studying Asian philology, archeology, mythology and religion simply because they have little impact outside of academia except possibly on Asians themselves. Aronson's concern has been with the influential image-makers among such philosopher kings as Geothe, Schopenhauer, Hegel and Nietzsche. I am inclined to accept Aronson's generalizations that not a single one of these comparative world philosophers ever used Asia any more than as a

means to advancing a philosophic argument about Europe's past, present or future.

Nietzsche is perhaps an excellent illustration. He incorporated earlier views on the East held by Goethe, Schopenhauer and Hegel, as well as by Gobineau. He was also familiar with Indian scholarship through his relationship with Paul Deussen, the respected Indologist and author of *The System of the Vedānta* (1883).[6]

What was Nietzsche's conception of the Orient and how did he use it in his philosophy? The answer to the first part of the question is that he had no conception of the East and that his Orient was simply a collection of stereotypes of 'Aryan' India and Iran. As for the second part of the question, since he believed in salvation by means of the warrior-type superman who was beyond good and evil, he identified with the popular contemporary German image of the Brahman caste being a survival of the pure Aryan race which had conquered the world with its military daring and skill.[7] In this context, Nietzsche accepted Gobineau's golden age vision of a pure-blooded Aryan race whose achievements were due to a superior social organization and code of behavior.[8]

But Europeans living in an age of Western dominance, were only too aware of the decline and fall of Indian civilization. Voltaire blamed it on Western commercial avarice long before Karl Marx appeared on the scene;[9] Gobineau saw India's degeneration in the mixing of the pure Aryan blood with the inferior blood of the native races.[10] Nietzsche, misusing Schopenhauer to his own advantage, blamed the Buddhists. He rejected Buddhism not as an autonomous ideology in an Asian context, but as an alleged functional equivalent of Christianity which he abhorred for its life—negational tendencies of misguided love and compassion.[11] Nietzsche's idea of the Orient, was, therefore, a mere footnote in support of his interpretation of Western history. His idea was both positive and negative depending on whether he spoke of the Brahmanic superman or of the corrputing influences of Jesus and Buddha.

[8] Gobineau's *The Inequality of the Human Races* (1853) is discussed in A. Aronson, *Europe Looks at India A Study in Cultural Relations* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1945), pp. 87-93. For his influence on Nietzsche, see Aronson, pp. 102-104.

The German fascination with India and Iran is interesting since few, if any, of her poets, philosophers, and even scholars, travelled to either of these countries. Max Muller, among the greatest of nineteenth century Indologists, never set foot on Indian soil. The fact is that the German nation was a latecomer among imperialist powers, had no territorial empire in the East nor much of an overseas empire anywhere. The reverse was true for the British whose sea power had enabled her to filch a substantial amount of the world's real estate. No other Western nation had so completely imbibed the imperialist credo as part of its imperialist image. Even its most well intentioned liberals of the nineteenth century such as Thomas Babington Macaulay were deeply imbued with visions of national power and glory. As early as 1835, Macaulay wrote that:

> The English ... have spread their dominion over every quarter of the globe ... have created a maritime power which would annihilate in a quarter of an hour the navies of Tyre, Athens, Carthage, Venice, and Genoa together, have carried the science of healing, the means of locomotion and correspondence, every mechanical art, every manufacture, everything that promotes the commerce of life to a perfection which our ancestors would have thought magical.[11]

From precisely such outbursts of optimistic fervor was born the mythic equation that Westernization equals modernization. If the increasingly industrializing West came to be conceived as modernity personified, the East gradually sank to a level equivalent to the most technologically primitive societies or as social scientists called them a century later, the underdeveloped nations of the Third World. Neither the cosmogonic myths of golden ages nor the perfect moment of truth achieved by classical ages satisfied the futuristic projections of Western positivists. The cyclical view of history was abandoned by the intelligentsia for linear theories of progress.

The intellectual games played by German philosophers were meaningless to the Macaulays. The Vedas, Upanishads, Vedanta, the heritage of the Brahmans, Buddhists and Muslims were considered next to nothing against the promise of the present age. Macaulay put it rather brutually and bluntly when he said in his famous

Minute on Education in 1835 that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."[12]

Between 1880-1910, or the period Allen Greenberger has called the "Era of Confidence for British Imperialism,"[13] cultural arrogance and exalted Westernism reached its highest point before the disastrous impact of World War I. It was the era of Kipling and his contemporaries when even an ounce of English blood could produce leadership in the least envied member of any inferior race. It was an era when even Christianity was organized as a colonial army of salvation and spiritually was measured by the size of one's biceps.

Macaulay, for all his ethnocentricism, still held out the hope of salvation to the East if only they would change their cultural citizenship and use their new English identity as a passport to modernity. Kipling was no Macaulay since he represented an imperialist credo which deplored intercivilizational interpenetration at the same time it denied the efficacy of Westernizing the inferior Asiatic breeds. The East and West were like a pyramid, Kipling's race at the apex and the Orientals at the base. Only the strength of the heroic soldier could bring East and West together. Otherwise :

> Oh, East is East and
> West is West, and
> never the twain shall
> meet.....[k]

If for Kipling, the British were everything positive, powerful and progressive, the Indians, as Orientals, were just the opposite. Greenberger has made a careful list of Indian stereotypes gleaned from British fiction during this period. First, the Indians were made out to be a childlike race to whom the British were fatherlike authoritarian figures. "By right of race," says Greenberger, "the Briton was the leader and father and the Indian the follower and child ; any attempt to upset this was to go against the rules of nature."[14]

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[k] Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," quoted in A. J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India* (London : Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 11.

Secondly, like children, Orientals were "governed by their emotions rather than by their reason."[15] Thirdly, they were conservative and as a culture "do not change, except under pressure from without, and they disintegrate suddenly."[16] Finally, they were passive and happy in their passivity, fatalistically so.

To Kipling, the Western educated Indian, generally associated with the Bengali babu, was both frightening and grosteque, a Frankenstein of British acculturation policies. Greenberger maintains that what Kipling feared about Westernized Asians was the process of acculturation itself, which to him was a sword with two edges, the Westernization of Orientals and the Orientalization of the British. At best, Kipling believed that if the British kept their racial and cultural characteristics pure they would make better rulers and would earn the respect of their Indian subjects. Aloofness, then, might preserve British integrity and the Empire. In the end, therefore, the British were not so different from the Germans and other European race theorists. Behind the fear of syncretism was a fear that the racial superiority of the West could and would be lost by a mixing of Eastern with Western blood.

Life Negation and the Indianization of the "East"

World War I was a brutal and terrifying shock to West European countries who suffered a considerable loss of men, resources and money. Among the lesser noticed losses were a sense of national well being and purpose and that simplistic faith in the idea of progress. Nevertheless, war's end found Western dominance persisting in the East in the familiar guise of imperial rule and colonialism. Greenberger calls this period between the wars an "era of self-doubt" for the British in which the entire imperial experience was questioned.[17] In fact, in some circles, it was not merely questioned but violently attacked. Interestingly enough, the critics Greenberger refers to attacked imperialism not for the harm it did to Oriental peoples and their cultures, but for its demoralizing impact on Western civilization.[18]

Most British writers, Greenberger asserts, turned a deaf ear to the Indian nationalists argument that the contemporary Orient was

not so much the creation of decadent civilizations held together by inhumane and corrupt traditions as it was the tragic result of colonialist oppression. Hinduism, in particular, was singled out as the most dangerously abusive and irrational of all Oriental belief systems. E. M. Forster's highly—acclaimed *Passage to India* which was first published in 1924, is perhaps the case in point illustrating the fact that even the most sensitive and intelligent of novelists was not immune to the prejudicial attitudes of his time. On the surface, this is the story of an alleged rape of an English woman by a Muslim in a cave somewhere in Western India. Actually, the novel deals with the deadly impact of Hindu negation on British character. Forster's cave was no mere backdrop, according to Greenberger, but a symbol representing "the sudden intrusion of timelessness, the horror of absolute vacuum in which human ambition, love, hate, even religion vanish as undifferentiated particles down an eternal drain."[19]

To Greenberger, the attitudes of Kipling and Forster to the Hindu menace were not dissimilar. The difference was that Kipling's heroes resisted negation and ended their India tours still reaffirming their "faith in progress and the value of Western civilization."[20] But Forster's characters are too fascinated by the cave and in the end "embrace their negation."[21] Stanley Cooperman, who has compared Kipling and Forster as imperialist writers, feels the same way. Forster's Europeans succumb to Indianization because they lack the "moral will" of an earlier generation.[1]

By Indianization, the British seem to mean Hinduization. It is the Hindus who have been exposed as the carriers of the deadly metaphysical disease known as life negation. Forster, himself, accepted Indian Muslims as being closer to the Western ideal. Nirad Chaudhuri believes that all the Hindus are presented in *Passage to India* "either as perverted, clownish, or queer characters."[22] Even Dr. Godbole, Forster's chief Hindu character, and the novel's mouthpiece of Hinduism, is, in Chaudhuri's view, "not an exponent of Hinduism but a clown."[23] On the other hand, the book's most rational Indian and chief Indian character, Aziz, is a

[1] S. Cooperman quoted in Greenberger, *The British Image of India.*

Muslim. Lawrence Brander, who has also written on Forster, made the following comparison about Hindus and Muslims in *Passage* :

> The first two parts of the novel are Muslim and Forster gets inside his Muslim characters with ease, for the Muslim is completely our brother, an exaggeration of our best selves. The difficulty comes in the third part when he deals with the Hindus.[m]

Hinduphobia was, of course, a more characteristic response of the British who from the time James Mill published his *History of British India* in 1819, were continually articulating their ambivalence about their Indian connection. In Germany it had been otherwise. Then in the period following World War I, the Germans began to stress the life negational aspect of Hindu thought. The influential sociologist, Max Weber, was convinced that among Orientals, Hindus were exceedingly other—worldly in their religion. They saw life as an abode of transient and meaningless drives from which an individual spent a lifetime achieving liberation. In the West, on the contrary, since the Protestant Reformation, people worked to better themselves and the world around them ; to improve the world was worthwhile because it was a manifestation of God's purpose. Weber's dialectic between East and West was between the alleged Hindu gnosticism which rejected the world with a passion, and the Protestant Ethic which passionately transformed the world into an instrument for human salvation.[n]

Albert Schweitzer argued rather much the same thing about Hinduism in his famous treatise on *Indian Thought and Its Development* (1936). As a dedicated missionary in Africa, Schweitzer was mostly concerned about the contrast between the Christian ethic of doing positive good in the world and the Indian ethic (both Hindu and Buddhist) which denied the value of such conduct since the "world is meaningless and sorrowful."[24] Only on the surface, he

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[m] L. Brander quoted in Greenberger, *The British Image of India*, p. 129.

[n] For an excellent study of Weber in the macro context of comparative sociology which discusses precisely this problem, see G. R. Madan, *Western Sociologists on Indian Society* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 225-251.

believed, did Christianity resemble Indian thought as an ideology of life negation. Said Schweitzer :

> Jesus does not preach the inactive ethic of perfecting the self alone, but active, enthusiastic love of one's neighbour. It is because His ethic contains the principle of activity that it has affinity with world and life affirmation.[25]

There were at least two noteworthy departures from nineteenth century German biases in Schweitzer. First, he repudiated race as a significant variable in the comparative history of East and West. The Indian Aryans may have invented the concept of life negation whereas Aryans elsewhere believed just the opposite.[26] Secondly, if many European thinkers redeemed the Muslims as non-Orientals, Schweitzer redeemed the Chinese as exponents of the principle of world and life affirmation.[27] On the other hand, the reference in both cases was to a weltanschauung of life affirmation in pristine Islam and Confucianism that was undefiled by Hindu contact and influence.

Interestingly enough, the idea that India was the source of all that Westerners feared and hated about the East was not only the belief of many Europeans during this period, but was commonly used as a rationalization for historic decline by Asians themselves. Indianization became a convenient scapegoat both for South Asian Muslims and for Chinese Neo-Confucian intellectuals. The Muslims blamed Hinduism and the Chinese blamed Buddhism for crippling their respective civilizations with the metaphysical disease of life negation. Neither Islam nor Confucianism was held responsible for Western dominance in Asia. Had both civilizations not been contaminated by the two pernicious forms of Indianization, the Islamic world and China could have developed their potential and become partners to Western progressive nations.

Hu Shih, a professor of philosophy at the National University of Peking, was one of the more articulate members of precisely this kind of scapegoat school of Chinese renascent theory. His article on "The Indianization of China" for a Harvard University Tercentenary volume on comparative world history, is perhaps the best historiographical study of this sort. The article appeared in 1937

when Chinese coastal cities were being ravaged by Japanese armies. The Japanese rape of Shanghai seemed the ultimate of humiliating experiences by industrial powers which had continued unabated for over a century. The Revolution of 1911 seemed to have gone nowhere. China remained impotent.

The article by Hu Shih purported to do two things : demonstrate that Oriental history in China was not indigenously Chinese and that China has had an historical development comparable with that of the West. Hu Shih's main thesis was that China underwent Indianization rather much as Europe underwent Christanization. Buddhism was China's Christianity and it changed China's culture drastically. Said Hu Shih about the more important "items of belief and practice" that poured from India by land and by sea into China :

> The ideas that the world is unreal, of life as painful and empty, of sex as unclean, of the family as an impediment to spiritual attainment, of celibacy and mendicancy ... of almsgiving ... of love extended to all sentient beings, of vegetarianism, of rigid forms of acesticism, of words and spells as having miraculous power... . These are only a few drops in that vast flux of Indian religious and cultural invasion.[28]

Hu Shih denied the common historical assertion that Buddhism was easily "uprooted" in China by "persecution."[29] "It continued to be the greatest religion in China," argued Hu Shih, and even now "continues to Indianize Chinese life, thought, and institutions."[30] China's only hope was to inaugurate a movement akin to the European Renaissance and structured along the lines of a "re-interpretation of the pre-Buddhist heritage."[31] The quest for the authentic Chinese tradition had to be wedded to the progressive currents of thought and values of the West. The objective of the Chinese Renaissance was to liberate the civilization from the stranglehold of Oriental life and world negation by which India had diverted China from her proper course in history. In Hu Shih's own words :

> With the new aids of modern science and technology, and of the new social and historical sciences, we are confident that we may yet achieve a rapid liberation from the two thousand years' cultural domination by India.[32]

Life Negation in the Modern West and Life Affirmation in the Traditional East

In the era following World War II, there was the intellectual tendency in the United States to disavow the adventurous spirit of the Faustian man of the West and to reevaluate life negation in the East as a positive ideology of salvation for a world continually on the brink of some ultimate disaster. Modern warfare, the explosion of nuclear devices, environmental pollution and the pursuit of loneliness in Western life, suggested to an alienated intelligentsia that the Orient may have been right all along and that it was the West which had taken the wrong road to oblivion.

Stephen Hay has shown in his *Asian Ideas of East and West* (1970) that the idea of the West being in a state of spiritual and moral crisis was a common reaction among the Asian intelligentsia from India to Japan.[83] Even Anglophiles such as Keshub Chandra Sen and Rabindranath Tagore in British India, recoiled with horror from the excesses of Western militarism and imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century.[o] From their vantage point in the colonies, and long before Spengler, Asian intellectuals saw the idea of progress as an illusion and Western civilization in a serious state of decline.[84]

But the faith in Positivism persisted among the Western elities. Then in the wake of two world wars, Hitlerism, Stalinsim, Hiroshima, the faith began to crumble as ambivalence in the West set in. Younger people redirected their quest for truth eastward to an alleged profusion of alternative attitudes about the ends of human existence. Oddly enough, at the same time that the West readied itself for Zen Buddhism, Yoga classes and the influx of gurus from India, Asians prepared themselves for the great leap forward into the age of high technology.

In *Psychotherapy East and West* (1961), Alan Watts spoke for a generation of disillusioned Westerners who could no longer equate twentieth century modernity with life affirmation. Thanks to Watts'

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[o] For a study of Sen and Tagore along these lines, see D. Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 249-310.

popularization of Asian thought, the East ceased to be symbolic of all that the West dreaded about the Orient. It was no longer exotic, inscrutable, occult, life or world denying The East became the true source of eternal wisdom. The great ideas were no longer monopolized in quotations from the intellectual forerunners of the modern West, but were increasingly found in the once—maligned sacred texts of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.

In this particular book on psychotherapy, Watts viewed himself as the Columbus of the psyche who had discovered in the sacred text[8] of the East a new world full of promise for liberating humanity from anxiety and neuroses. The Western psychiatric idea that therapy was equal to social adjustment, was to Watts comparable to believing that the earth was flat.

Buddhism, Vedantism and Yoga were not religions of escapism but critiques of orthodox systems or cultures. Eastern mystics were reformers of the human condition and rebels against all organized attempts to repress the human spirit. They were dangerous to the defenders of the status quo because they exposed the causal connection between human suffering and false norms and values imposed by rigid institutional structures. Watts believed that the term "maya", for example, or "illusion", represented a critical concept which had been greatly misunderstood in the West. It did not mean that the world was unreal but that the artificial world-conception of a culture was an illusion. In the following quotation, Watts spelled out what he understood as maya in relation to the central idea of Eastern psychotherapy :

> The aim of a way of liberation is not the destruction of maya but seeing it for what it is, or seeing through it ... ideas of the world and of oneself which are social conventions and institutions are not to be confused with reality. The rules of communication are not necessarily the rules of the universe, and man is not the role of identity which society thrusts upon him.[85]

Watts not only intended to transform the image of life negation into a positive idea of social criticism and individual self-realization, but he tried also to change the image of the practitioner from passive,

life—denying ascetic to Promethean hero who resists social oppression to liberate the human psyche. This brought Watts into conflict with Freud and Freudians over the dubious concept of the Nirvana-principle. In Freud's view, the change of consciousness and personality effected in Eastern ways of liberation brought about "depersonalization" or "regression to an infantile mode of awareness."[36] Freud's Nirvana-principle was another way of reducing Eastern liberation to life negation. The Oriental's quest for Nirvana which literally means extinction represented "the longing for return to the oceanic consciousness of the womb."[37] Destroying his ego was tantamount to burning his bridge to society and social responsibility.

Watts refused to accept the Freudian notion that the search for wholeness in nature or the universe was necessarily a negative act of regression. "Our mistake has been," said Watts, "to suppose that the individual is honored and his uniqueness enhanced by emphasizing his separation from the surrounding world, or his eternal difference in essence from his Creator."[38] When one looks at "the lively and varied features ... of Chinese and Japanese paintings...the ideal personality here shown is anything but the collective nonentity or the weakling ego dissolving back into the womb."[39]

The Americanization of Eastern Studies

Among the establishment academics in America researching and teaching Asia, the 1960s was an exciting decade of easily procured grants to support a wide variety of projects in the humanities and the social sciences. It can be truly said that Americans took Asia very seriously and independent India, in particular, was overrun by a generation of linguistically competent regional specialists.

In the United States, the intense intellectual concern for Asian area studies only came after the demise of Western empires in the East. The fact is that Asian studies in American education itself underwent a national liberation struggle for autonomous recognition in the university curriculum. To study India, for example, before the 1950s, one had to take courses in British Empire or the Expansion of the West. Moreover, the United States had become a world power and the challenge by the Soviet Union in the 1950s seemed to

accentuate the need for cultivating Asian language and area studies. Government support for crucial languages that only a few Americans knew, justified in the name of national defence, accelerated the process of deepening American scholarly interest in the East.

Americans entered the Asian field as individuals from a diversity of backgrounds, disciplines, and purposeful commitment to given culture areas. There were former missionaries who had served in China or India and the sons of missionaries, World War II intelligence officers who had served in the China-India-Burma theater, and a legion of anthropologists, political scientists and economists who saw Asia as a golden opportunity to test out fashionable theories on acculturation, charismatic leadership and modernization.[p]

Though the older generation of Americans were scientifically oriented, the younger scholars tended to approach Asia as cultural relativists and structuralists. The reason was that most of the grant money available for students was designed to train language and area specialists. It should come as no surprise that these very specialists ultimately shaped the American conception of Asia which, if the truth were known, is no conception at all. Language and area studies destroyed much of the older interest and focus on the international monoliths such as Asia and the West. Attention was now concentrated, not infrequently for a lifetime, on intracivilizational regional and local societies and cultures. The assault had begun in earnest to level the macro conception of Asia and leave it as ruin for future archeologists of human consciousness. In its place were being constructed a pluralistic universe where diversity was king and where Asia was proliferated into an endless number of cultural units, each being shaped by a scholar who endowed it with its own integrity and history.[q]

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[p] Many of these persons collaborated in publishing among the first syllabi on Indian Civilization. See *Introduction to the Civilization of India* (Chicago : Syllabus Division, University of Chicago, 1957).

[q] For an exhaustive stuty on how Bengali regionalism in South Asia studies developed in the United States, see D. Kopf, "A Bibliographic Essay on Bengal Studies in the United States," R. V. M. Baumer, ed., *Aspects of Bengali History* and Society (Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1975), pp. 200-242.

The problem of unity and diversity in the American approach to Asia was very much in evidence early in the 1960s when the committee of Oriental Studies at Columbia University organized a conference on this subject and invited the very best Asianists to participate. The transactions were later published as *Approaches to Asian Civilization* which was an apt title because it suggested that diversity was a more fitting way to approach Asia among Americans and that its convenors and editors believed it important to express as many different attitudes and methods as were possible.[40]

The book is significant from the viewpoint of East-West encounter in the manner that the problem was ignored or dismissed. Only one of twenty-nine scholars even bothered to address himself to it. To be sure, the universalist attitude of the social scientist was present in the papers given by William Lockwood and Daniel Lerner. But they were out of place because they seemed far more concerned with abstract models of tradition and modernity as they related to an anticipated homogenized world in the future, than with discrete culture patterns in Asia.[r]

Only Karl Wittfogel in his article on "Ideas and the Power Structure," appeared willing to carry on the historiographical tradition of differentiating the East from the West.[41] In the past, as we have seen, macro studies of the East and West invariably meant macro level generalizations. Wittfogel was no exception. In the article which was based on his *Oriental Despotism*, Wittfogel argued that the power structure was the unifying factor in all Asian empires. From ancient times, said Wittfogel, "Western observers have been struck by the extraordinary strength of the state in 'Asia'."[42] Oriental despotism, in sharp contrast to the democratic West, can be traced back historically to the earliest attempts to control and maintain vast irrigation systems which were essential to produce the food surplus upon which the agriculturally-based civilizations depended for survival.

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[r] This was especially true of D. Lerner, "Basic Problems in the Contemporary Transformation of Traditional Societies," T. de Bary, A. T. Embree, eds., *Approaches to Asian Civilization* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 219-239.

In the United States, today, Wittfogel's idea of hydraulic despotism, like F. S. C. Northrop's idea of the 'undifferentiated aesthetic continuum"[43] which he has treated as a core concept in the Asian mind, have become relics of a past which Americans have largely rejected. At the Columbia conference, the comparative approach was still a matter of debate. Ainslie Embree who commented on Wittfogel's paper, argued for the need of "great intellectual constructs," but then cautioned that these conceptual schemes "could prove so entrancing" that they would "be accepted with uncritical enthusiam."[44] In another paper, Arthur Wright warned that if we became too comparative about China and the world, we would lose the distinction between what was "Chinese history" and what was "metahistory."[45] This angered Professor F. L. K. Hsu who challenged Wright's "negativism" and argued that if "each civilization were unique, then we could learn nothing from history or ethnography, and we will be forced to throw the sciences of man into the river."[46] Richard Lambert, South Asian sociologist and one of the forerunners of the language and area programs in the United States, proved to be prophetic about what he called the "uniquist" approach to the study of Asia. In his own words :

> This term implies something more than the fact that each of us tends to be working on only one area, it implies the belief that the culture we are studying is in many ways unique. Light is to be shed upon one aspect of the culture by probing more deeply into its unique setting. In contrast to the comparativist realm where the grand system builder is king, in the ranks of the uniquist, the man with the greatest depth of erudition in the smallest fragment of a single culture reigns supreme.[47]

McNeill's History of the Human Community : Europe and Asia Joined at Last

It should surprise no one that America's only supreme effort at writing comparative history on the grand scale, William McNeill's *Rise of the West*, was the least philosophical of any world history ever written [48] McNeill was Toynbee's nephew but as world historians, there was no intellectual kinship between the two. McNeill's

preface to what he subtitled a "History of the Human Community," was mostly composed of apologies for shortcomings and a list of acknowledgements. There was no introduction and the conclusion was simply an extension of the narrative in which predictions were made for the future cosmopolitan world order.

It is little wonder that McNeill has been so respected among American historians. His book was immensely rich in detail; every argument was amply documented from the best sources found in dozens of historiographical traditions; the style was lucid and never obscured by flights of poetic imagination or philosophic discourse. There was a judicious choice of maps, charts and illustrations. The methodology was so impeccable from a professional historian's point of view, that it seemed hardly possible that McNeill was writing a history of the world.

Nevertheless, *The Rise of the West* has a conceptual framework and has contributed historiographically to the problem of East-West encounter. First, McNeill, the diffusionist, followed a technological device, religious inspiration, philosophic idea or aesthetic creation from civilization to civilization in order to demonstrate that the historical modification of any of these culture complexes was largely a result of intercivilizational interaction. For McNeill, therefore, the idea that high cultures were afforded the luxury of pursuing essentially independent careers was a myth. Secondly, there was no East or West but a Eurasian community of civilizations from the Mediterranean Sea or later, Atlantic Ocean, to the China Sea. Eurasian history was a history of critical interrelations from the beginnings of recorded time to the present.

Finally, McNeill concerned himself with the great movements which have arisen from time to time in one civilization or another such as Hellenism, Buddhism and Islam. The point, here, is not that they have all been cross cultural in impact but that each has disturbed the balance of the Eurasian community of cultures, although only relatively so. The significance of the rise of Western Europe since the sixteenth century was that for the first time, one of the civilizations became so powerful that it ultimately dominated the others.

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Though McNeill paid occasional lip service to such terms as the Orient and the Occident, and despite the use of "West" in his title, the book has been purged of most of the older stereotypes. The relentless flux of history from Europe to East Asia which McNeill depicted in all its majestic fury, had at least swept away the more dubious images of the earlier imperialist era.

From East and West to North and South

American scholars have no doubt radically altered the traditional perspective on the East-West encotnter. Whether guilty of academic imperialism in Asia or not, no one would deny that they have produced a set of new verifiable generalizations on discrete cultures from a wealth of hard data. Many Americans feel they have made authentic discoveries because they have approached other cultures as insiders learning to speak and behave like natives. Americans have even carried anthropological relativism to its ultimate and in the process, some believe, transcended the imperialist ethos and finally laid to rest the persisting and, often, pernicious myth of East and West.

But myths and ideas die hard unless the conditions which produced them also disappear. Even if the conditions disappear, persisting perceptions may not. Also, symbols which have been discarded by scholars may still be usefully manipulated for political reasons. In 1978, for example, a book appeared on *Orientalism* which was written by a professor of comparative Western literature who also happened to be a highly politicized and militant Palestinian.[49] For Edward Said, the author, the encounter between East and West was still very much alive first because of the Israelis, and secondly, because the so-called Orient cultures of today were perverted creations by the West in order to maintain its world dominance. Said did not believe that imperialism ended with the fall of West European empires in Asia ; on the contrary, America and her Asian scholars have extended it with new forms of dominance and myth-making about Orientals.

Said, an angry man, has used or misused "Orientalism" as a sewer category for all the intellectual rubbish Westerners have

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exercised in the global marketplace of ideas. Though Westernized, he admitted that he never "lost hold of the cultural reality of, the personal involvement in having been constituted as an Oriental."[50] It is precisely because men like Said feel that their identity has been lost in the network of Western myths and illusions created out of the East, that they have revived the myth of East-West polarity.[8] As with V. S. Naipaul, also an eloquent and sophisticated Westernized writer, Edward Said's quest for the true Asia is a projection of his own identity crisis.

More recently, East and West, though no longer identified as such, have been seen from a new perspective. The fact that Japan has become the equal of any Western nation or that China has won enormous respect for her potential power, seems to suggest that older political and economic disparities between the West and East are becoming increasingly meaningless. The dispartities between higher and lower standards of living, military strength, industrialism and high technology seem much more evident between North and South than between West and East. Japan, China, the Soviet Union, Europe and North America constitute the North whereas Southeast and South Asia, West Asia and Africa, Central and Latin America constitute the South. In 1980 a new periodical was published from London called *South* which not only incorporated the idea but claimed for itself to be "The Third World Magazine."[51]

South, for all its attempts to articulate a new position in world affairs, cannot betray the fact that the object of its wrath remains the West which is still, as always, the source of all the evils that plague the have-not nations. It is only the East which has seemingly disappeared but has actually been absorbed in a larger community of peoples, cultures and nations who share in common an acute sense of frustration at having remained backward and undeveloped. The editorials and articles in *South* suggest that the Third World cannot accept the fact that the privileged fraternity of Western nations now includes the Soviet Empire and Japan, with China standing at the door for admission. Seemingly, just as the West used the East as a

[8] For a more extensive analysis of Said, see D. Kopf, "Hermeneutics versus History;" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXIX (May 1980), 495-506.

scapegoat to explain its own alleged decline following World War I, the Third World now uses the West as a scapegoat for its own inability to achieve modernization in our own time.

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RAM MOHUN ROY AND VIDYASAGAR : DYNAMICS AND CONSTRAINTS IN THEIR ROLE AS MORALISTS

A. R. H. COPLEY, M.A., M.Phil., (Oxon)
Senior Lecturer in History,
The University, Canterbury,
Kent. CT2 7NX

This paper emerges less from recent research[1] than from present teaching[2] and is written in the belief that the role of the historian is as much to ask the right and provocative questions as to provide answers. A general question lies behind the paper : what was the nature of the response of reform-minded Indian intellectuals to the social and political circumstances in which they found themselves in the early to mid-19th century ? How passionate was their response ? How angry were they ? It is an enquiry which tries to get at the dynamics and the constraints of that response. A way into so large a question is by studying the psychology and attitudes of Ram Mohun Roy and Vidyasagar. Amongst the most prominent religious and social reformers of 19th century Bengal, (Bengal, of course poses quite particular questions and cannot be taken as a paradigm for India), they are both personalities about whom we are now especially well informed and whom we may be best equipped to comprehend. By describing them as "moralist" the intention is to concentrate on their interest in what might loosely be described as questions of personal morality, their attitude to religion, to the family, the role and status of women, to sexual morality. Their anger was directed at custom but this was done in the name of tradition and an immensely difficult interpretative question has subsequently arisen as to the dialectical relationspship in their thought between tradition and modernity. How did this drawing on tradition colour or inhibit their critique of contemporary society ? Particular questions are posed as to the nature of their 'rationalism' and the character of their 'feminism'. Clearly Roy's

and Vidyasagar's role as moralist were greatly complicated by the political presence of foreign rule and by the changing economic and social relationships provoked by that presence and the question has to be rasied as to the way the political context and the economic and social framework in which they found themselves both affected their response to such moral issues and prompted a more wide-ranging political and social thought. Central to that set of questions is their response to the moral dimension of imperialism, to its "Victorianism", which will clearly have to be defined, and raises at the outset the possibility that so strong was the impact of moral imperialism on both Roy and Vidyasagar that our best description of them might be as "Victorian" moralists. But it will also be argued that 'Victorianism' may best be grasped as a morality functional to modernising societies and such universalist implications will be illustrated by looking at the response of intellectuals to analogous moral questions in other societies ; those of Fourier and Proudhon in France, and Chernyshevsky in Russia.

Whom did Ram Mohun Roy and Vidyasagar represent ? The simple answer remains the Bengali bhadralok, a minority Hindu community drawn from the Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaisya castes, but five per cent of the population of Bengal as a whole and maybe but one per cent of Calcutta.[5] The Bhadralok were caught in a dynamic relationship between, on the one hand, the Bengali population, particularly in their role as an urban group with links with the rural community and on the other, the colonising European presence. The tensions of this situation are crucial to grasp if we are to understand their response to the claims of tradition and custom, and more finely, the clash of loyalties between the two. Let us initially try to establish the character of their status as an elite group within Bengali society. A great deal seems to hinge on whether this was a new elite, a comprador group, dependent for its social power as clients of the Company, or whether it had deeper historical roots, constituting an indigenous or native Indian bourgeoisie. In significant ways their attitude to tradition and custom would be affected by this historical contextuality. It ties in with another continuing debate in Bengali history : at what moment and in what numbers so called new men reach out from being a commercial and moneyed class and take on a new role as landowners

through the purchase of Zamindari. If a very old debate, we might begin by pointing to B.B. Misra's[4] study as the one which emphasised the newness of this Bhadralok middle class, its taking on a comprador role for the company, its assuming new 'western' roles in the professions introduced by the Company in law, medicine and in teaching, and in subordinate roles in the new Company administration. He was quite clear that indigenous social and cultural constraints prevented the natural emergence of any indigenous entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Another entrenched interpretation asserts that these new men especially profited from the auction of Zamindari estates at the time of the Permanent Settlement and thereby became a new landed elite. This had important consequences for their attitude to tradition and custom. Pradip Sinha put it thus[5] :

> "The essentially rural proclivities of the Bengali commercial class, furnished with a fresh impulse by the new land settlement, tended to draw that class back into the past and into a social role that centred round the patronage of tradition. The fantastic expenditure on Sradhs and social ceremonies, the influx of pundits and priests, disputes over breach of caste rules, excommunication for social heterodoxy were some of the typical features of early metropolitan society which can be clearly associated with the social role of the dominant families."

This is an interpretation which emphasises the inherent insecurity of the bhadralok as a new elite, one which might alternatively drive them into a compensatory assertion of the claims of tradition or so alienate them from their own society that they would have no choice but to identify wholly with the new European culture. But is this account correct ?

C. A. Bayly's deeply impressive new study[6], if largely concerned with Northern rather than Eastern India, is relevant to this enquiry. It invites us to think again about the origins of the Indian middle classes ; to revise our view of the 'Black Century', of India's immediate pre-colonial period, and of its links with the 19th century. "There is always a temptation" he warns us, "to opt too firmly either

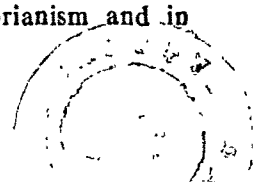
for an argument which stresses continuity or for one that stresses change"[7]. Clearly his own preference, however, in discussing the emergence of the Indian middle class, is for one that stresses continuity. His picture of 18th century Northern India is one of the consolidation of both new Hindu merchant corporations and a service gentry in the successor states of the political post-Moghul dispensation, social groups he sees as precursors of the commercial bourgeoisie of the late 19th century. What is particularly fascinating for any discussion of the claims of tradition and custom was the way this 18th century Hindu community put such stress on piety and asceticism, on an appropriate merchant dharma, if for a few, an alternative cultural model of largesse and conspicuous consumption was adopted.[8] Though his study is only obliquely concerned with Bengal and his commentary is but tantalisingly brief, he seems to be saying, as indeed one would expect, that if Company rule broke the power of a Bengali political service gentry,[9] an 18th century middle class survived in Bengal, as it had it Northern India, a rural bhadralok which

> "did well out of the permanent settlement while at the same time they were tightening their grip on public office in colonial Calcutta. Thus even the clerkly 'babu' of Victorian Calcutta – Macaulay's revenge as it seemed to many later administrators – did not spring fully formed from Britannia's helmet but bore witness to longer-term changes in the bazaars of rural Bengal."[10]

Clearly there was here a middle class less easily thrown by the European presence, more confident of its place in the community. Does one recent authoritative account (B. Chaudhuri's[11]) of the history of the Zamindari mesh with this interpretation ? It is now claimed that the turnover of Zamindari in the 1790's was minimal and that few 'new men' moved in, though by new is meant new 'moneyed elements', and does not include bureacrats of the Zamindari system or of former governments. The old order did not rapidly decline even if decline was to set in. The men at risk were the large Zamindari ; the smaller were to survive. It is a view which likewise qualifies the idea of a new and insecure elite. Bengal's ancient regime was not rapidly replaced. All this pre-empted the

bhadralok from any need for a compensatory defence of tradition. A picture emerges of a society better equipped to meet the challenge of the west, less necessarily rigid in its defence of orthodoxy. In the late 18th century and early 19th century, a cultural dialogue between East and West became possible.

Let us now try to portary the other parameter of this debate and discuss the character of colonial rule. Clearly the severity of colonial rule, the extent of its chauvinism, more euphemistically described as "its civilising mission", will greatly affect the character of an Indian intellectual's response to tradition and to custom. The great shift in Company policy, of course, lay in the transition from an orientalist to an anglicist policy, a debate of the early decades of the 19th century, clearly made by the time of Macaulay's minute on education of 1835. We now enter an Age of Reform : on the one hand, the post-Moghul 18th century order went into decline, on the other, the Company pursued a vigorous policy of retrenchment, entailing new land-revenue policies and the pursuit of utilitarian ideas. The aspect of that policy most germane for this article was moral Imperialism, or 'Victorianism' and this might be the point to raise interpretative uncertainties as to the nature of Victorianism. This is also the moment to consider Ashis Nandy's extraordinarily stimulating new commentary on these matters.[12] Nandy sees behind colonialism, certainly after the shift to Anglicism, 'modernity'. However, if we inspect 'Victorianism'[13] we will find that this was far from being unadulterated modernity. 'Victorianism was an essentially defensive reaction, maybe by way of 'moral panic', to the challenge of the French and Industrial Revolutions or, just as plausibly, an anguished endeavour to find some moral substitute for loss of Christian faith in an age of increasing materialism and secularisation. In some senses, this was a consciously anti-modern strategy, a looking back to some puritan tradition in England's past (as well, of course, to the feudal, chivalric and Gothic), the better to strengthen the ruling middleclass elite in its current bid for power. It was neo-traditional. It may also help our understanding of the phenomenon to cease seeing it from the post-2nd World War vantage-point of a quest for the 'permissive' society, and alternatively as a functional device, a way of strengthening the resolve of this new ruling elite. It is also tempting to see in Victorianism and in



Imperialism an ideology which sought to transcend class loyalties ; in its way, a species of communalism. It is of course important to keep open the idea that the Indian reform movements of the 19th century were less in response to this challenge than a continuation of a debate already initiated in the 18th century.[14] Ashis Nandy reads into colonialism a though hyper-masculine ideology, a repression of the feminine, and sees in one whole strand of Indian intellectual response, 'counter-players' is the word he uses, an attempt to absorb that masculine ethos at the expense of India's feminine values, both a serious distortion of Indian culture, and a psychological process damaging to colonizer and colonised alike. Dagmar Engels puts it slightly differently. She sees in both the Raj ideology and Bengali male attitudes, a masculine fear of and attempt to control female sexuality, with the Raj, however, seeking to impose its own repressive chivalric code as a means of humiliating and subordinating the Bengali.[15]

Ram Mohun Roy formulated his own response before the full weight of the anglicising policy was felt. It might be appropriate to apply to him Ashis Nandy's account of Roy's contemporary, Michael Madhusudan Dutt : his was an attempt "to explain the West in Indian terms and to incorporate it in the Indian culture as an unavoidable experience".[16] But Nandy does see Roy as a counterplayer to colonialism, one who subscribed to its masculine values. Vidyasagar, on the other hand, remained true to the feminine values of Indian culture ; his anti-colonialism was not defined by the Western version of rationalism ; he "sought to make instrumental use of the transient, unavoidable oppression of colonialism to meet India's needs".[17] How acceptable is this differentiation between Roy and Vidyasagar ? How do we interpret their role as moralists ? How radical or iconoclastic were they in their response to Hindu orthodoxy ? What factors drove on their critique, which restrained ?

Maybe the point of departure for such enquiry is to investigate their familial circumstances, both parental and marital, for the Indian joint-family was clearly one nexus of orthodoxy and with women arguably amongst the key transmitters of orthodoxy, relationships with mothers and wives could become major determinants in attitudes towards change. This article has at its

centre the idea of a differentiation between tradition and custom, but, of course, this was often only in the mind of the intellectuals ; in social practice, they overlapped, and the distinction to many Hindus would have been far from clear. Ram Mohun Roy[18] was born 22 may 1772, into a Kulin Brahmin family, in a village in the district of Burdwan some one hundred miles from Calcutta. His father, Ramkanta Roy, though a stern defendant of vaishnavite orthodoxy, proved an ineffectual Zamindar, whose indebtedness led to the loss of his Zamindari in the 1790's. His mother, Tarini Devi, emerges as a far more vigorous personality, likewise a stauch defendant of orthodoxy, and Roy's life was to be plagued by a prolonged court battle over the family inheritance, his mother disputing his right to the ancestral property on grounds that Roy failed to fulfil ceremonial obligations incumbent on its ownership, Roy's was more of a nuclear than a joint-family. Ashis Nandy suggests that this intensified the abreaction with his parents ; his was an attempt to compensate for his father's weakness by creating a more patriarchal Bengali society ; guilt feelings he felt over conflict with his mother concerning custom led him to advance 'feminist' ideas.[19] It is difficult to be sure of Roy's own marital circumstances. As a Kulin Brahmin he contracted three child marriages ; one died young, the second, to be mother to two children, died in 1824 ; the third outlived him.[20] But was there additionally a Muslim mistress, a dancer, who may have provided him with more intellectual companionship ? And who accompanied Roy to England ? Was this Jane Hare, illegitimate daughter of David Hare's brother, Alexander ?[21] Roy did not recover his father's zamindari status, but through service to the Company, acquired wealth, became a landowner and a man of property in Calcutta, taking up residence there in 1815. It was, in all, a background which certainly bred neurotic conflict with his orthodox background but gave him confidence in his exchanges with English friends and European values.

Vidyasagar's personal backround was strikingly different.[22] Born 26 September 1820, he likewise was from the Kulin Brahmin caste, his native village, Birsingha, some fifty miles from calcutta. Both his parents were highly orthodox, yet were always to be strangely accommodating to their son's radical career. His father proved a tough task-master, often beating the young Vidyasagar,

all in the name of bringing his son up in a orthodox Sanskrit education. But Vidyasagar came to revere his parents and always sought their approval. His mother died in 1871, his father 1876, so theirs was a prolonged presence in his career. His stammering might indicate some neurotic legacy from their upbringing. At 14 he married Dinamayi Devi, aged 8, his only wife, by whom he was to have five children, a son, born 14 November 1849, and four daughters. If a loyal wife, even to accepting the widow remarriage of their only son, she does not seem to have been educated and cannot have provided Vidyasagar with much intellectual companionship. Vidyasagar proved no defendant of the joint family ; his sister and brother broke away ; he lived apart with his wife and children, though in time, one of his widowed daughters returned as his housekeeper. As his biographer put it, Vidyasagar was "not well-disposed towards the Hindu system of the joint-family. . It was not his innate fault. It was his English education that produced in him this failing."[28] Vidyasagar's was a background of harsh poverty ; in conditions of considerable urban squalor in Calcutta, the young Vidyasagar took on the roles of household cook and domestic. His education trained him to be a pandit of the English courts : in fact, he became a civil servant of the Company as an educationist, though was to resign in 1859. In time, he became more financially independent, both through his publishing-house and his setting up a private college, the Metropolitan College. It was a background that seemingly tied him to orthodox views but paradoxically his supportive parents made possible his radical critique. His administrative career took him into a close dependence on the Company and may have led to a greater intellectual surrender to the West, but in his later life he was to move back to more of a compromise position. But this is the point to investigate the extent of their revolt against orthodoxy.

Maybe the central question to be posed about their differentiation between tradition and custom is, how merely opportunist was this, a means of culling arguments from tradition to sanction their attacks on aspects of custom, e.g. sati, the prohibition of widow remarriage, etc., or was it out of a sincere regard for India's Vedantic cutlure ? This is clearly crucial in assessing their role as reformers, as arguably, advocacy of Vedantism saddled India

with a continuing regard for an other-worldly, maybe reactionary, set of values, a serious handicap in India's pursuit of change and modernisation. Another way round of formulating this question is to ask, how committed were they to rationalism? Yet Rationalism is open to differing definitions and in discussing Roy's and Vidyasagar's rationalism one is reminded of conflicting interpretations of the Enlightenment, of Karl Becker's minority view that the philosophers' regard for Reason was akin to that of the medieval schoolmen, to Thomism, and the more accepted view that theirs was a pragmatic and scientific rationalism, influenced by the writings of Newton and Locke.[24] Roy was a theist, and one's reading of his life and writings leads one to argue that his was a sincere admiration for such Vedantic texts as the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras and the Bhagavadgita. His rationalism led him to attack idolatry and defend monotheism, but even here he displayed a 'Voltairean' tolerance for worship, though in the clear recognition that idols were but symbols and such idol-worship was but as a means of concentration for prayer.[25] Yet Roy's was not a simple acceptace of the non-dualist assumptions of Vedanta, of the concept of Maya, for he saw the world as having some empirical reality and this created the space for policies of social reform and the evolution of a philosophy of disinterested social action. (Cf. Radakrishnan, whose was likewise a non-dualist interpretation of Vedanta, but whese acceptance of the World as itself part of the Absolute Reality, allowed his prolonged dialogue with the assumptions of western science as well as his concern for social justice.) What was the origin of Roy's commitment, if limited, to Rationalism? Tapan Raychaudhuri has stated: "no scientific or geographical revolution formed part of the 18th century Indian historical experience. In terms of ideas and attitudes, mid-18th century India was not all that different from the world described by Marco Polo."[26] We know that his monotheism owed much to his study of Sufism and Buddhism. Amales Tripathi states: "Vedantic texts are the sheet anchor of his religious views. It is important to note that in fixing the order of authority among the texts, he is indebted to the historical-critical methods of the 18th century."[27] To what extent or, maybe more importantly, at what stage had he come under the influence of Benthamite utiliterianism? Intriguingly, Vidyasagar, far more a product of orthodox

Sanskrit education than Roy, was to come up with arguments much more deeply indebted to the European rationalist and scientific approach. Vidyasagar was clearly an outstanding Sanskrit scholar. On completion of his studies at Sanskrit College, at the age of 20 he acquired the sobriquet 'Vidyasagar' or 'Ocean of Knowledge'. This compensated many times over for his father's failure to fulfil his caste obligations of becoming a Sanskrit teacher in a tol. Clearly Vidyasagar did not despise this Sanskritic culture or Hinduism : he embarked on a Bengali translation of the Mahabharata ; he submitted a Bengali text-book to Fort-William College on the theme of Krishna as an incarnation of God.[28] But he sought to cut from the syllabus of Sanskrit College all text books which merely elaborated on religious ceremonial. He was an agnostic ; the only 'Gods' he acknowledged, and this merely by way of showing respect, were his parents, and only for their sake would he fulfil ceremonial, e.g. a year's long observation of shastric mourning rites after his mother's death, shraddic ceremonies for both his parents. Vidyasagar's, of course, was a thorough-going critique of the very education he had acquired and in his reform proposals for Sanskrit College in 1850 he not only picked away at such defects as mindless learning by rote in Sanskrit language classes but betrayed a determination to link Nyaya and Vedanta classes with advanced western philosophy and metaphysics. He wanted more time devoted both to the study of English language and of European mathematics. Students literate in both English and Sanskrit would, he pointed out,

> be better able to expose the errors of ancient Hindu philosophy than if they were to derive that knowledge of Philosophy simply from European sources."[29]

Amales Tripathi tellingly argues : "One feels that if he had not found the favourable text in the shastras, he would have proceeded on the rationalist-humanitarian lines."[30] His was an altogether more thorough-going rationalism than Roy's and suggests that Ashis Nandy's attempt to see him as a more limited counter-player to the West is wrong, though, as we will see, Vidyasagar was later to qualify his position.

A series of questions now ensues on the one hand as to how radical was their feminism and how far they both reached out for a

broader programme of social change, and on the other to what extent an examination of those factors intrinsic to their Indian background put a brake on their social protest. Their distinction between tradition and custom was, of course, one largely devised during their struggle on behalf of Indian widows ; the object of this article, however, is not to describe their campaign against sati and widow remarriage, but their attitudes to structural change. Roy, of course, did not support widow remarriage. But he did advocate female education and sought greater civil rights, above all of property ownership, for women. He was alerted to the plight of tenant farmers under the Permanent Settlement.[31] But can one point to any sustained critique of economic and social injustice ? Vidyasagar's was seemingly a far more emotional and practical commitment, both to the condition of women, especially for female education, and to the plight of the poor, through providing free education (he found a free school for the poor in Birsingha), free meals for the starving in times of famine, dispensaries in times of sickness. He sought to open the doors of Sanskrit College to other than the twice-born castes. (Only I think, in practice, to the Kayasthas.) Yet, even here, was there any coherent programme of social change ? One could argue that Indian economic and social conditions would not necessarily have struck observers as any worse than those of contemporary Europe and if Europeans did not protest, why should we expect Indians to do so,[32] but this clearly will not do, as European intellectuals were to express outrage at economic and social injustice within European society. Possibly Roy's limited critique owed something to his propertied status. One even wonders if his attack on sati owed something to his conservative alarm at its being used by lower castes as a means of upward caste mobilisation, an expression of sanskritization.[33] How differently might Indian intellectuals have felt about social change had they shared a Western linear view of time as opposed to a Hindu cyclical view ? Did Roy or Vidyasagar believe in the 19th century European idea of progress ?[34] The most substantial difference between Roy and Vidyasagar seems to lie in their use of the traditional Vedantic texts. Whereas Roy far more successfully plundered the traditional texts and for all his logic-chopping legalism betrayed a firm acceptance of their claims, there was something of the schoolboy's proverbial debating-point in

Vidyasagar's use of the Sloka from the Parasar-Sambita. One cannot be surprised that Radhakanta Deb awarded the shawl to the orthodox pandits in their second debate, for, however misguided their ends, their use of the traditional texts was both more committed and may be more extensive. And this is the point. Vidyasagar could break free to a more wide-ranging feminism just because the inspiration for his advocacy lay less with 'tradition' and more with a 'modern' humanism. Listen to the language he used for his critique of polygamy :

> "The stronger sex of this country have been cruelly persecuting the weaker one under pretexts of some evil customs and practices, of which Polygamy is, at present, the most pernicious of all. This very vile, inhuman practice has caused incalculable sufferings to the woman-kind. The hardships and miseries that the females undergo under the prevalence of this custom are really heart-rending. In fact, the violence has run to such excess, that those who have the least conscience and sense of right and wrong, have one and all stood up against this cruel practice. They heartily wish that it should be abolished this very moment."[85]

Yet an equally compelling explanation for the character of their feminism and the limited extent of their social radicalism lies in their relationship with colonialism, to Company Rule and the Raj. Both Roy and Vidyasagar enjoyed amicable relationships with Europeans though the latter's quarrels, as with Mr. Karr[86] and Mr. Young[87], and the 'Indian shoe' incident,[88] suggest that his were the more conflict-laden. Both criticised colonial rule, both sought out its advantages, though Roy may have the less positively encouraged its intervention in social reform, probably preferring voluntarism to Bentinck's intervention by ordinance to end Sati, Vidyasagar continuing to advocate Raj intervention on the question of polygamy even long after 1857. Both were progenitors of what came to be christened "the politics of mendicancy". In the process, both absorbed some of the content of Victorian moral imperialism and one has to ask if in this borrowing from Victorian patriarchy, with its implicit stress on social hierarchy and, to use Ashis Nandy's interpretation, its cult of the hyper-masculine, one finds the real explanation for their

limited modernity. Less importantly, but a reflection of the same process, there is plenty of evidence to show that Roy and Vidyasagar pursued the uplift of Indian widows out of a very Victorian sense of shame at the clear connection between widowhood and prostitution.

But the response of Indian intellectuals was nevertheless ambiguous. As the oppressive and culturally chauvinistic ideology of the Raj began to come home to Indians after 1857, and maybe, just as significantly as the Raj began to waver in its special relationship with the new Anglicised elite, so Indian intellectuals began to retreat more into tradition, be it still as counter-players with an emphasis on a masculine Hinduism and a proselytizing approach. Vidyasagar himself may have sought out government support on the question of polygamy but in other areas he seemed to retreat : he opposed full licence for Trustees to use the income of lands endowed for idols ; he defended the continuing use of the burning ghats of Nimtala ; he opposed the introduction of a female Normal College ; he broke off all relationships with his village bacause his brothers went ahead with a widow remarriage that he had discouraged ; he opposed government intervention over the Age of Consent, believing that advocacy of the custom that marriage should not be consummated till menstruation was a more acceptable way of protecting child-brides. Maybe it is in this set of attitudes that Ashis Nandy is more correct in suggesting Vidyasagar's affirmation of the feminine in Indian culture. The most crucial negative aspect of colonialism, however, may lie in just the way anti-colonialism bred such social reaction.

But there remains one further dimension to this debate ; how necessary was "Victorianism" to change ? Clearly "Victorianism", that strange compound of respect, protective and fearful, for women and of guilt at sexuality, represented one reaction by a society in crisis, a society undergoing more traumatic change than at any stage of its history. Arguably all societies experience such attitudes as they face this crisis of change or 'modernisation'. To establish the claims to such universalism one might take a glancing look at the response of intellectuals in other societies.[89] It is revealing to see how a French radical social reformer like Fourier came up against

the forces of 'Victorianism' and saw some of his most libertarian views of feminism and sexuality bowdlerized by his own followers by the 1830's. An even more radical social critic, Proudhon, was to become locked in a guilt-laden debate on sexuality and the role of women and seemingly presented hopelessly contradictory opinions, but was he not seeking in the purity of the family and the sublimation of sex some answer to the challenge of industrialisation ? It is equally odd to read the novel by that most radical of populists, Chernyshevsky, "What is to be Done", and to discover that if his was a feminist rejection of the 'bourgeois marriage' and of the aristocractic 'mistress' in the name of egalitarian friendship, the only way his heroine could pass from one friend to another, in the name of love, was through the suicide of her first lover. There was something extraordinarily 'Victorian' about the sexual morality of this generation of Russian radicals. Early 19th century Russia, of course, presented a somewhat similar social system to that of India. Maybe Indian intellectuals had likewise to discover some analogous 'Victorianism' to cope with the dislocations of change in their own society, precipitated by colonialism ? But could they find in 'tradition' appropriate attitudes towards the status of women and sexuality ? Maybe they did, and I think this was true of Russian intellectuals, to annex some of those Victorian values from the West. 'Victorianism' was a necessary adjunct of change, but one which led to many ambivalent responses within 19th century India.

This article has opened up a rather general debate on the social and political background conditioning the attitudes of the bhadralok intelligentsia towards change and a much more specific investigation into those factors shaping the psychology and mind of Ram Mohun Roy and Vidyasagar. The fit between these two approaches may remain impressionistic. One is also aware that quite different aproaches might have been taken up e.g. the clash between colonialism and India as one between a contract and a status society, looking more specifically at the distinction between marriage as contract and as sacrament. One tentative conclusion points to Roy's more assured response to western ideas but greater social conservatism. There seems something potentially symbolic about Vidyasagar's fearful row with Ram Prasad Roy, Roy's youngest

son, for his failure to lend moral support by attending a widow remarriage. Angrily he told him to tear up the portrait of his father but was that in anger at Roy or the son, for Roy himself did not support widow remarriage. The fulcrum of this debate may lie in the impact of "Victorianism"; maybe "Victorianism" has to be very carefully unpacked to discover its own constituents of traditionalism and modernity. This article has tried to open up some further thoughts on this theme.

NOTES

1. Maybe I can draw attention to some earlier personal publications: on Roy, see "Reflections on Attitudes Towards Women in Indian Traditional Society". *South Asia Research* Nov. 1981, No. 2.

   On Vidyasagar, see "The Debate on Widow Remarriage and Polygamy: Aspects of Moral Change in the Nineteenth-Century Bengal and Yoruba-land". *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol VII, Jan. 1979, No. 2.

   On moral imperialism see "Projection, Displacement and Distortion in 19th Century Moral Imperialism: A Re-examination of Charles Grant and James Mill." *The Calcutta Historical Journal*, Vol. VII, No. 2, Jan.-June 1983.

2. I teach a course entitled "Moral Codes and their Critics" at the University of Kent, which ranges across 19th and early 20th century Britain, India, France and Yorubaland, trying to diagnose the character of Victorianism, particularly amongst intellectuals, both as its exponents and critics, and which, at the least, raises a comparative approach.
3. I have taken these percentages from Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to modernisation.* 1983, p. 11. This is a useful recent account of Bengali women's involvement and response to 19th century modernisation.
4. B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: their growth in modern times*, O. U. P., 1st Published 1961.
5. Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 92.
6. C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion* 1770-1870, C. U. P., 1983.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 382-85.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 467.
11. See B. Chaudhuri, Ch. II, 'Agrarian Relations in Eastern India' in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. II, C. U. P. 1983.
12. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy : Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, O. U. P., Delhi, 1983.
13. This is now a much discussed question : it may be enough here to refer to rival views of Victorianism by Edward Shorter in *The Making of the Modern Family*, Fontana, 1977 and Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Wedenfeld and Nicholson, 1977 and the able overview by Jeffrey Weeks in *Sex, Politics and Society*, Longman 1981.
14. See K. N. Panikkar, 'Cultural Trends in Pre-colonial India : an overview.' *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 2, July-Dec. 1980.
15. Dagmar Engels, 'The Age of Consent Act : Colonial Ideology in Bengal.' *South Asia Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, November 1983.
16. Ashis Nandy, *op. cit.*, p. 22. A reference to Michael Madhusudan Dutta.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.
18. My comments on Roy derive mainly from Ed. D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli. S. D. Collet, *The Life and Letters of Ram Mohun Roy*, Calcutta, 1962 and Amiya Kumar Sen. *Raja Rammohun Roy. The Representative Man*, Calcutta, 1967.
19. See Ashis Nandy, 'Sati — A nineteenth century tale of Women, Violence and Protest' in Ed. V. C. Joshi, *Ram Mohun Roy and the process of modernisation in India*, Delhi, 1975.
20. This is how Collet reported the story.
21. See news and Views from India in the *D. K. Newsletter*, Vol. VII, No. 14, 20 July 1981.
22. For Vidyasagar I have relied heavily on Subal Chandra Mitra. *Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar*, Delhi, 1965 and Amales Tripathi, *Vidyasagar, The Traditional Moderniser*, Delhi, 1974.
23. S. C. Mitra, *op.cit.*, p. 483.
24. See Karl Becker, *"The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers"*, Yale 1932 and maybe, amongst a large number of works, P. Gay, *The Party of Humanity*, 1964 and N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, London, 1968.
25. For an expansion of such ideas consult D. H. Killingley's *The Only True God : Works on Religion by Ram Mohun Roy*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1982 and his "Ram Mohun Roy on the Vedanta Sutras" in *Religion*, Vol. Eleven, April 1981.
26. Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'The Mid-18th century background'. *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, *op. cit*, p. 33.

27. Amales Tripathi, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
28. It was not accepted, "He never tried to write another book on the sound principles of Hindu religion." S. C. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
29. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 199.
30. Amales Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
31. See Paper on the revenue System of India. *The English Works of Raja Ram Mohun Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 287-301.
32. Gillian Tindall has some interesting insights along these lines in her "*City of Gold*: *The Biography of Bombay*". Temple Smith : London, 1982, p. 182.
33. For this view of Sati in the early 19th century Bengal see Ashis Nandy, 'Sati' in Ed. V. C. Joshi, *Ram Mohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, *op.cit.*, and P. G. Pedersen, "Dynamics of Culture : A World's System's Approach to Widow-Burning". A paper submitted to the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Jan. 1983.
34. Ashis Nandy in his "The Intimate Enemy", *op.cit*,, contrasts the Indian mythic and cyclical view of terms with the Western Linear.
35. S. C. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 568-59.
36. Vidyasagar gave him an elementary lesson in good manners : not to rest your legs on your desk in the presence of visitors.
37. This was a much more serious dispute over educational policy as well as a clash of personalities.
38. Vidyasagar was denied entrance to the rooms of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta 28th Jan., 1874, because he would not remove his Indian "slippers".
39. This is not the place for any extensive bibliography but I'll just mention E. Lehouck, *Vie de Charles Fourier*, Paris, 1978 ; Edward Hymas, *Proudhon*, London, 1979 and N. Chernyshevsky, *What is to be done?* (reprinted by Virago Press), London, 1982.

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THE ALTERNATIVE VISION : A STUDY IN THE INDIAN ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO ORIENTALISM

RATNABALI CHATTOPADHYAY

The Eighteenth Century European Enlightenment had produced as one of its major intellectual constructs, the 'Oriental Renaissance'.[1] The institutionalisation of 'Orientalism' as a branch of European academic pursuits dating from this period coincided with the advances of European merchant capitalism. Hence the correlation of 'Orientalism' with Western control over the East in the European mind. In the context of India, 'Orientalism' acted as the most important mediating factor between British imperialism and the development of Indian elite culture.

By the latter part of the Eighteenth Century the British found themselves in political authority over India, and their physical presence in the country changed the European perception of India from the 'contemplative' to the 'actual'. To Europeans, particularly the British, India emerged as a geographical and political entity, to be administered for the maximisation of their economic gains. This first phase of British impact on India can be described, as 'violence in its natural state'.[2] It brutally wiped out the colonised native's past as 'barbarous'.

The second phase (beginning in the mid-nineteenth century) saw attempts on the part of the colonisers to promote their own image as saviours. They now adopted the role of mediators, explaining and constructing for the colonised intelligentsia their lost culture and origin. It was then that 'Orientalism' came to play a crucial role. As an institutionalised system of knowledge, it developed the theory of common origin, explained the strange social practices of the colonised to the colonisers, and handed over the same formula to the colonised intellectual to develop his own self-image. The inherent contradictions within this formula created the problematic for the colonised intellectual, who internalised the given European

liberal concepts developed by Orientalism as anti-colonial. Yet apparently remaining outside the schematic pattern of exploitation and rule, Orientalism as a particular structure of thought definitely upheld the norms of the dominant culture, and reinforced the claims of European cultural hegemony.

Remaining within the structure of reason acquired through Orientalism and colonial education, Indian intellectuals during the process of decolonisation, tried to repudiate colonial power. An ambiguity thus became central to their reasoning, splitting them at the roots from the moment of developing a new identity. In the context of Indian artists, an attempt to authenticate their position led to their oscillation between two needs — a national identity and a unique individuality deriving from the acceptance of European concepts.

Keeping in mind the triangular dialogue that follows between the colonisers, the natives and the native intellectual, during a process of decolonisation, this paper will mainly attempt to explore the historical emergence of the Indian artist as a colonial subject, and his responses and reaction to 'Orientalism'.

I

The changing European Perception of India

Though Indian art wares were familiar in Europe from the ancient period, discovery of India by sea created a new interest in Indian products. The first period of the opening up of India to the West had been dominated by the motivation of buying cheap and selling dear. By the decade following 1850, however, the British were established in the country as rulers and it was raw materials, rather than finished goods which fixed British interest in India. The period of the 'Great Drain', ended in the virtual destruction of India's luxury crafts.[8]

From the many studies made of the problem of 'deindustrialisation', it is quite clear that it was due as much to ideological constraints as to economic. The different tastes of the British and its enforcement through a colonial education, had resulted in the

development of that long sought-for 'Black British Culture'.[4] This was evident by the 1850 decade in the colonial architectural mode of the Indian residences, with interiors filled with Italian glass, marble statuary, oil paintings, Dresden China and Buhl cabinets. Meanwhile, Indian luxury crafts steadily lost its market both within and outside the country.

The Great London Exhibition of 1851 brought in a second opinion to operate on British policies in India, by its enthusiastic responses which it drew from some European artists and connoisseurs. The Exhibition had made apparent that whatever the views of orthodox British experts like Wornum, European connoisseurs (Flaubert and the economist Blanqui) found a great deal that was admirable in Indian Art. They drew the attention of European craftsmen to the excellence of the techniques and skills of Indian artisans.[5]

James Mill, the famous author of the 'History of British India', inspite of his low opinion of Asian societies in general, felt that he had to make an exception in the case of Indian applied arts, particularly weaving. He, however, made it clear that the Indian arts were in a primitive state. The achievements in the field of painting were negligible because "They are entirely without a knowledge of perspective and by consequence of all those finer and nobler parts of the art of painting which have perspective for their respective basis". Depending on this logic, Mill declared that though Indian craftsmanship should be praised for its ability to 'copy', Indian fine arts were generally unattractive, being 'unnatural' and 'offensive'.[6]

Mill's views had a definite influence on shaping the government's art policies in India. His differentiation between 'art' which required 'the exercise of Intellect' and 'craft' which only required 'skill', and his judgement that the traditional artists in India "had no scientific knowledge of the language of art, and were therefore unable to create an illusion of nature", mainly determined the shape of the curriculum of the Indian art schools till the 1890 decade.[7]

In contradiction to Mill's view developed the second opinion, though not uniform, still clear in its appraisal of Indian designs to

be superior to the European. Preoccupation with Indian designs coincided with the rise of a new aesthetic movement in England which demanded reformation of industrial designs.[8] People associated with the movement were of different interests — Owen Jones, author of *Grammar of Ornaments*, Dyce and Cole interested mainly in setting up schools of art, Ruskin, an influential critic who found little to admire in Indian fine arts, but shared an enthusiasm for Indian crafts, and finally William Morris, who wanted to bring about complete social change in England.[9]

A distinctly novel approach was provided by Morris. To him the artisan productions of the European middle ages represented the lost ideal. Morris saw the same excellence in the Indian crafts, which were the achievements of the ordinary and anonymous workmen.[10] He praised Cole and the other founders of the British art education movement for presenting examples of Indian crafts to the European public. He also stringently criticised the British government, whom he and Birdwood, author of *The Industrial Art of India*, held responsible for the destruction of Indian art.[11]

"While we have met here in Birmingham to further the spread of education in art, Englishmen in India are in their short-sightedness actively destroying the very source of that education — jewellery, metal work, pottery, calico printing, brocade weaving, carpet making; all the famous and historical arts of the great peninsula has been for so long treated as matters of no importance to be thrust aside for the advantage of any paltry so called commerce."[12] As an illustration of his statements, Morris pointed to the presents given by Indian princes to the Prince of Wales on his visit to India in 1875. "It was pitiful to notice how the conquered people had copied the blank vulgarity of their lords." He pointed out that the Indian art objects, once freely available in England, were becoming scarce due to the art policy of the British government, and had only become "precious relics for the Museums we have founded for our art education".[13]

The reason why Indian designs offered the alternative, sought by British artists facing the aesthetic crisis of an industrialised society, was summed up by Owen Jones. Dyce had (earlier) pointed

out that "Oriental Ornamentation" was so "agreeable and natural" because the designers did not copy but worked on the same principles which were used in the decoration of natural objects. "The objects of the ornamentalist is not to make mere copies of natural objects."[14]

Jones pointed out that while European designers had lost their guiding principles in an industrialised society, Indian craftsmen, true to their traditional values of life, reproduced them as guiding principles in their crafts. The result was production of articles important 'both in variety and beauty', "furnishing the most valuable hints for arriving at a true knowledge of those principles which should regulate the employment both of ornament and colour in the decorative arts.[15]

Interestingly, the entire artistic debate in Europe in the 1860 decade revolved round the question of 'form' in plastic arts. The rejection of industrialisation led to the rejection of designs whose basis was 'illusionist' (i.e. creation of the illusion of the natural object). The British artists found in the 'flat' depictions of Indian designs a rhythm which retained the appeal of a past civilisation. The 'designs' came to represent a whole way of life.[16]

But the perception of these art reformers did not influence the art-policy framers in India in its initial phase. What was communicated to them in the 1850 decade and after was the British public demand for Indian luxury crafts.[17] So, depending on the totally contrary opinions of men like Mill and Macaulay, early art educationists tried through a Western academic training to perpetuate the Indian artistic crafts. It resulted in some bastardised products acceptable neither to Indian nor European sensibility. Moreover this was totally rejected by British artists and educationists like Havell as "non-Indian". It is through the denial of the obsolete elements of Western academic training that the second opinion of Morris and Jones came to influence Havell, throughout the period that came to be known as the period of the "Indian Nationalist Art Movement".

II

Orientalism and the Alternative Vision

In 1784 Sir William Jones published his famous essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India" finally dissolving the "monster" tradition of the Indian images. Intellectually this marks the period of 'syncretist theories' which were current at the time in European thought. The constant parallel drawn between Siva and Brahma on the one hand and Bacchus and Dionysus on the other, also laid the foundations of that search for analogues which marked the studies on Gandhara art. By the second decade of the 18th century, intellectual stirrings caused by 'Oriental Renaissance' led to a search for ancient Asian texts and studies of Asian languages. By the late 18th century, with the increasing acquisition of colonies, Orientalism came to constitute an indispensable part of Europe's intellectual experience. Gradually the theories of analogy yielded place to the 'monogenetic theory' — "All civilisation was to spring from the oldest nation". All arts therefore had a common origin. Interestingly, it was Voltaire who came to discover in Hinduism the "oldest cradle of civilisation and the centre for all knowledge of the arts and science".

While the 'monogenesis'-polygenesis' controversy continued in Europe,[19] India gradually emerged as one of the richest of British colonies. By the 19th century, with the development of scientific archaeology and its applications in India, both academic studies and imaginative interpretation placed India in the central position of British awareness as the "most recurring image of the other".[20]

It was also becoming apparent in the writings of the British and French intellectuals of the 19th century that, in the context of the 'Orient', certain specific motions on 'race' and 'imperialism' were called for.[21] By the early twentieth century it was quite clear that 'Orientalism' was not any European fantasy about the 'Orient', but a "created body of theory and practice in which for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment". 'Orientalism' as a course of study was allowed to grow generally in European academies, and specifically in British and French

educational institutions as the curriculum through which to "dominate, restructure and have authority over the Orient".[23]

It was mainly this image of the 'other' which appealed to Havell and Coomaraswamy who sought an alternative to the industrialised societies of Europe. Havell's *Ideals of Indian Art* (1911) and *Aryan Rule* (1918) reveal the British Orientalist turned administrator, who brought the entire rationale of the 18th century European Orientalism to prove the common origin of the Indians and the British. Havell had little sympathy for the political creed of 'Swadeshi' which, to him, aimed only at economic and political power. He saw little validity in a national movement which did not place 'art' in the centre of its demands. But his exasperation turned to anger as he saw the persistent non-comprehension on the part of the British art-administrators: "We may be satisfied that the sum of our achievements in India is far greater than that of our failures, but that does not explain India's unrest or lessen it. Artistic blundering is certainly not one of the major grievances of the Indian nationalist, perhaps from a consciousness of his own share in the degradation of Indian art. But a living popular or national tradition of art is the expression of the people's mind and if from a lack of understanding of it we repress its free development, we are sitting on the safety valve of national life and provoking an explosion".[24]

The role of the art educator had been adopted quite consciously by Havell. His inability to prevent the destruction of Indian crafts by British education policy finds expression in angry denunciations. Both in his rejoinder to Cecil Burns regarding the condition of the art schools in India, and in his analysis of the problems of the revival of Indian Art, he points out that the British were responsible in two ways for the decay of Indian 'skill' and 'taste'. First inspite of the fact that principles of Indian craft manufacturers were being used in Germany and Holland, British art educationists in India like Cecil Burns had already decided that "Indian art was dead". Secondly, it was the concerted aim of the British educationist and the English-educated Indian to transform India into "suburbs of Manchester."[25]

'Craftsmanship' was a way of life with Havell. To him neither Indian craft nor the Indian artisan was dead. Acceptance of the

verdict of the British administrator was only *leading* to the destruction of Indian craftsmen[25] : "then there would be nothing wrong in ignoring, as Anglo-Indian administrators have always ignored, the educational and ethical factors represented by the existence of the ten million Indian hereditary craftsmen. It is doubtless the easier way for Indians to throw aside all their artistic tradition as obsolete, to accept blindly the teachings of European commercial experts, to multiply factories and to join in the mad scramble for markets which Europe calls civilisation. But is this the ideal which will satisfy the Swadeshi reformers ?"[25]

But to Havell inspite of the 'Charlatan rich Indian' and the 'blundering British administrators', conditions for artistic revival were far more favourable in India than in the materialist west. It was this discovery of a living geographical location for a nostalgic past that distinguishes Havell's involvement with India from that of the average European Orientalist. His firm conviction that Indian art was part of India's religion is repeatedly expressed : "There is true art instinct in the humble peasant who takes the choicest flowers he can find and with patience and skill weaves them into a garland for the village shrine. And so there is in the craftsman or labourers who rejoicing in the cunning of his hand and with no thought for extra profit for himself, puts into his work the best that his knowledge and skill can produce".[26] He finds the love of beauty in the anonymous Indian craftsman, whom Morris was seeking, and whom the British education had left untouched.

It would therefore be simplistic to call Havell a 'Neo-Platonist'[27] in his endeavours to discover in ancient Indian art manifestations of a spiritual reality. It is true that primacy of 'Idea' behind 'appearance' had gained currency through Neo-Platonic theories in Europe, but common reactions to European industrialisation had also involved going back to the medieval European past. In visual arts the manifestation had been through a denial of the principles of Greek 'mimesis' — the slavish imitation of nature. With the induction of the criterion of 'beauty' as a standard for intellectual assessments of art, it was pointed out that beauty lay beyond the physical and that it was the spiritual idea which found its manifestations in nature. Consequently, Havell found in Indian aesthetics a supportive

argument, as idea manifested itself through natural objects — the tree god, the serpent goddess, the *Shalgram Shila* (sacred stone representing the *Narayan*). If the intellectual workings of Europe in the late 19th century were propelled by the logic of 'idea behind reality', it was also enriched by a knowledge of the past, through archaeological discoveries. For the first time the judgement of aesthetics was set aside as archaeology came to be used to study the customs, ways of life and the history of a people. It brought the disciplines of History and Anthropology to bear on studies of art.[28] In India, the scientific principles of archaeology came to be applied to discovery of new sites. The history of civilisations then being compiled in Europe began to include India. The writings of Fergusson and V. A. Smith on Indian history owed much to the new archaeological discoveries.

Havell started refuting this approach to Indian Art. In the preface to his book on *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1907), he clearly articulated his perceptual approach — "The principle of this book is artistic, not archaeological, but I have ventured to differ entirely from archaeological ideas of Indian fine art, which seem to me to give a completely distorted view of the intentions of the Indian artists".

As the Indian normative texts, the 'Shilpasastras', came to be discovered, Havell's case was strengthened : "Indian art is essentially idealistic, mystic, symbolic and transcendental".[29] He further pointed out from the *Visnudharmottara Purana* that the Indian sculptor had to master dance and music as part of his training. The image maker's craft was closely intertwined with the imbibing of the universal rhythm. Havell now advocated two acts, from his position as an art educationist. First he demanded that the West recognise that Indian art was not dead and therefore did not require revival. It only demanded the right to survive. In the works of Abanindranath and his students he saw the continuation of that 'form' which could best embody the spiritual aspiration of the modern Indian, who was in touch with his artistic heritage. "The old Indian picture and sculpture galleries such as those at Ajanta, Amaravati and Ellora as well as the Chitrashala, the private galleries of the aristocracies were schools of religion, of morality,

of national culture and history ... your children should learn the stories of Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha not only from books but from pictures painted on your walls ... There will never be a true Renaissance of art in India until the fine arts are restored to their proper place in the national life".[80] Second, he appealed to the educated Indian to take up the initiative of keeping alive his traditional arts without waiting for governmental aid. "You do not expect the government to understand and aid you in your religious movements. Why should you expect them to keep alive your art ?"[81]

It is in his position as 'Guru' (teacher) to Abanindranath, and in his attitude to the developments of Fine Arts in India, that the contradictory pulls in Havell become clear. In his championing of the Indian crafts he pointed out that the distinctions between 'minor' and 'great art' were unknown in pre-British India and alien to the Indians. The Indian must therefore deny these norms. In forwarding the artistic attempts of Abanindranath and his students he conceded that a craft movement cannot succeed without a corresponding fine arts movement. Here he contradicted himself. The contemporary capitalist norms, though repugnant, had become ingrained, even in the best of the Orientalists and became conventional categories of assessment. Like all Orientalists, Havell faced an impossible situation. The capitalist ethos of the British colonial rule was repugnant to him, but so was 'Oriental despotism'. He tried to find a solution to this in his 'Aryan Rule'. The Indian, according to him, accepted British rule, and had a faith in British justice because the rulers and the ruled shared a common race ideal — that of the 'Aryan'.[82] This tied up with his characterization of Indian art as essentially "idealistic, mystic, symbolic and transcendental". Together with his perceptual approach to art and an idealist approach to history, Havell more than any other contributed to the 'mystification' of Indian history. He, along with some other 'Orientalists', shared a faith in India's invincible spiritual force which was manifested through Yoga and meditation. The transformation of abstract knowledge into an image was to be found in the 'Yogi figure in meditation'. The visual expression of the Orientalists' intellectual deliberations therefore came to be embodied in the Yogi image of Shiva and Buddha. Finally, by

1910 it was clear that the Buddha image symbolised the entire culture of the east for the European.[33]

Havell's administrative tasks created further responsibilities for him, which were only complicated by his Orientalist training. He regarded the Indian political movement for autonomy as a result of British ignorance. His views of the situation were clear. "The Eastern question is always with us, for the fate of the British Empire is bound up with it, and the kernel of the Eastern Question lies in India, the country which has contributed most to the wealth, prosperity and power of the Empire. But neglect of the study of Indian history or colossal ignorance of it has never been regarded as a disqualification for the highest position in the Government of India".[34] His attempt to remove this ignorance was however finally recognised by the British media as they openly acclaimed his efforts : "Indian Art is spiritual and that contrary to the belief of many once and a few now, the Indian builder is still alive and is not likely to die out". A British journalist also conceded that "Mr. Havell has spent a life time pleading this cause and has seen European opinion come round in some measure to his view".[35]

III

The Oriental Orientalist : A Crisis in Identity

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's involvement in the Indian aesthetic movement (known as the Swadeshi art movement) was of an individual in quest of his own identity. In India's attempts to incorporate Western capitalist ethos, he was in agreement with the European who, looking for an alternative to the Western industrialised society, felt betrayed as "he saw his own face distorted in the Indian mirror".[36]

Coomaraswamy's part-Ceylonese origin, his public-school upbringing in England and his obvious admiration for William Morris drew him close to India at the historic moment of the Swadeshi movement, which was regarded with mixed feeling by European Orientalists.

To Coomaraswamy, the moment was split in two. On the one hand, he noticed the difference in the interpretations of the Indian reality by Asian and European Orientalists. On the other, it marked a period of convergence of Asian and European Orientalist attitudes in the common belief in the primacy of the spiritual over the material in any political movement.

The official British policy, Coomaraswamy felt, reflected the non-comprehension of the average European, which had brought about the 'explosion' forecast by Havell. But unlike Havell he could not accept the simple solution offered by British Orientalists. "Imperialism and social reform are incompatible"[37], he declared. He however universalised the particular Indian problem as "a protest of the human spirit, against a premature and artificial cosmopolitanism".[38] Recognising this 'cosmopolitanism' as capitalist demand for markets, he pointed out its destructive impact effectively felt through the system of European education. "Every Government and Missionary College and school must be replaced by colleges and schools of our own, where young men and women are taught to be true Indians. So long as Indians are prepared to accept an education the aim of which is to make them English in all but in colour — and at present they do in the main accept such education, they cannot achieve a national unity".[39]

Coomaraswamy also understood the full significance of a political movement which aimed at 'autonomy'. "The two sides of the nationalist movement, the material and spiritual, are inseparable and must attain success or fail together. Political freedom and full responsibility are essential to self-respect and self-development. Once this autonomy is gained, then India will in the main judge all things by her own standards and from her own point of view".[40]

The two pre-conditions for the development of a nationalist consciousness were a common language and a geographical unity. Coomaraswamy refuted the current British assessment of the inherent plurality in Indian society. He put forward as the main unifying factor the past cultural traditions, mainly of the Hindus. He took his stand on the ancient canons, particularly of the *Sukranitisara*. The main significance of these canons for him lay in a

formalisation of conventions which guarded the anonmyity of the ancient Indian artist.

To him, a uniform style reflected a common ideal. This anonymity was pitted against the individuality of the European artist, whose identity was expressed only through formal experiments resulting in the artist's personal style.[41]

Coomaraswamy fought against the two basic assumptions of British art education (the interpretation of nature in art, and the knowledge of scientific principles to create illusions of the visual world) regarding questions of perception. Particularly in *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, he showed conclusively that Indian art progressed with development of images, which were conjured from abstract ideas of creation and destruction. Since these involved special mental exercises, 'Yoga' or meditation was required. As particular physical manifestations of gods were *dreamt* of not as men, but as ideal stereotypes, the principle of depictions had to be different from those persued in Western art.[42]

Finally, both in the *Aesthetics of the Sukranitisara* and *Reactions to Art in India* he makes it clear, that Indian art was conceived as a system of communication: *Rasa*. This communication was between the connoisseur, who had gone through a process of initiation and had become the *Rasika* and the *Shilpin* or *Karikar* — the artist. For the non-educated, ignorant of the sixty-four arts (*kalas*) religion was the main signifier. The artist went through a mystical experience (*dhyana*) when he conceived the image through his action, which is one of piety, he transformed it through a plastic medium to a recognisable form (*Sādrishya*). The image now through the life-giving ceremony (*Chakshu dana*) became the embodiment of beauty and a particular emotional force. Anger and benevolence expressed through facial expression, gestures and multiplication of limbs became the plastic expression of certain moods. The image constructed was at the same time the 'being' and 'signifier' of a specific idea.[43]

It was through the translation of these conceptual texts, and their interpretations explaining Indian art that Coomaraswamy tried

to penetrate the veil of European ignorance, and at the same time bring about an awareness of 'self' to Indians.[44] Because of his close contact with the Tagores, this 'awareness' developed an 'Oriental' or rather a pan-Asian character. The arrival of Okakura and the Japanese artists (with their message of the common Ideals of the East) strengthened the Asian Orientalists in their attempts to understand and explain their own art in their own terms.

Okakura's first visit to India was between 1901-2. Residing in Suren Tagore's house in Calcutta he wrote *Ideals of the East* in English, (with a preface by Sister Nivedita). This was recognised as the first attempt by an independent Asian to speak about his own art. Significantly for the colonised Indian, both Sister Nivedita and Okakura emphasised that 'Asia is one'.

A new identity was given to the 'people of the Orient'. Hitherto mainly subjects of colonial discourses and objects to be perceived by an 'Occident', synonymous with the 'Coloniser', they now transformed the epithet to mean 'Asian' and therefore people of a common culture.

In giving a historical account of Japanese art, Okakura spoke of the specific moment of Western penetration : 'The advent of the American Commodore Perry finally opened the flood-gates of Western knowledge, which burst over the country so as almost to sweep away the landmarks of its history'.[45] Its effects, so similar to what had happened to India, were deplored in almost the same words as Coomaraswamy had previously used. 'Political theories and social reforms, worn out in the land of their birth, were hailed here with the same new delight with which they took to the stale and old-fashioned goods of Manchester ... '.[46] The art that was taught in Japanese schools by Italian masters were pedestrian, mediocre and worn out, the European art before Dalacroix.[47] So, Okakura and other like-minded artists sought a release from this dead art form of the West. They started an exploration of their own artistic past for new inspiration.[48] The ancient artistic canons began to be used and even made known in the West. Lawrence Binyon in *'The Flight of the Dragon'* (1911) cites the six canons which formed the backbone of Chinese and Japanese art. Of the six

instructions to the artists — rhythm, anatomical drawing, appropriate distribution of colours, grouping according to hierarchy of things i.e., composition and the transmission of classic models, depiction of spiritual rhythm or vitality expressed through movements, were put forward as the motive force behind Eastern art.[49] It marked a difference with the dominant European concepts which were limited to the physical.

The attempts of Coomaraswamy and Okakura may be regarded as achievements of Asian Orientalists, articulating their own views about the 'Orient'. It is here that the conflict starts. The Asian's awareness of self had come through Western knowledge ; mainly imparted to him by European Orientalists ; he now used it to strike at the power structure which provided the basis for this knowledge. This is best illustrated through the debate continuing throughout this period on the origin of the Buddha image. It had been asserted by Foucher and others that the Buddha image was conceived and executed by a Gandhara artist. This implied bias pointed to the obvious Hellenist, and therefore, European influence on the Gandhara style. Coomaraswamy strongly denied this in *Art Bulletin* (1927). A number of European authors supported him. Coomaraswamy's logic pointed to the dualism which pervaded the contemporary Orientalist thought — "the Buddha image was Hellenist in depiction but Indian is conception". The image of the seated Yogi figure is "specially Indian, being foreign to Western psychology".[50]

It was these contrary views fused into a common symbol which led the Asian Orientalists, even in the midst of their anti-colonial struggle, to agree with the liberal European. The point of common understanding lay in the mutual belief in India's invincible spiritual resources. The Indian tradition was interpreted as essentially 'idealistic and transcendental' ; art, therefore, only came into being through the development of religious sensibility. Coomaraswamy advocated a return to ancient Indian superstitions of religion rather than the capitalist 'superstition of facts'. Indian history was mystified into glorious tales of moral victory and particular periods of history, specially periods of India's conquests abroad (prior to 1200 A.D) were emphasised. The Asokan and Gupta empires

were interpreted as specific examples of India's spiritual victory, through the spread of Buddha's message. Both Okakura and Coomaraswamy in their attempts at the negation of the colonial intellectual domination emphasised ancient Indian Imperialism.[51] It is here that Coomaraswamy's 'mirror image' appears apt; only the mirror is reversed. The Asian Orientalist had become so used to seeing his own image through the imperial mirror, that once it was removed, he became faceless.

The fusing of the two Orientalist visions are best expressed in the Royal Society arts debate.[52] Sir George Birdwood, the author of *The Industrial Arts of India*, made a remark on a Javanese Buddha figure displayed in the Society's gallery. 'The senseless similitude, by its immemorial fixed pose, is nothing more than an uninspired brazen image, vacuously squinting down its nose to its thumbs, knees and toes. A boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionate purity and serenity of soul'.[53]

A number of English intellectuals and artists immediately leapt to the defenc of Indian art as they rightly recognised Birdwood's remark as having been addressed to India. Several of them wrote in *The Times* on 28th February 1910: "We the undersigned artists, critics and students of art ... find in the best art of India, a lofty and adequate expression of the relgious emotion of the people and of their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine. We recognise in the Buddha type of sacred figure one of the greatest artistic inspirations of the world."[54]

III

The emergence of the Indian artist as the Colonial Subject: Abanindranath Tagore of Bengal.

In spite of the endeavours of the European Orientalists like Havell, the main stream of public opinion in India was dominated by the colonial art education schema. This was structured through the art schools which, by 1867, numbered twenty two. The three major art schools in the country were established in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. The courses were formulated in the model

of the South Kensington Art School in London. Though the main aim was to turn out artisans, certain measures were devised as necessary aids for their training. The first was the setting up of an art gallery as an adjunct to the art school. The hope expressed was that the native youth would in general gain that rudimentary training in aesthetics that would enable them to appreciate what was beautiful in his own landscape and architecture. This would only be possible if he also acquired 'an idea of man and things in Europe'.[55]

Inspite of the Lieutenant Governor Richard Temple's declaration, which sounded like the British taking up the white man's burden, the officials realised that the cost of acquisition of original European masterpieces could well be prohibitive. So the government appealed to native Zamindars and resident Europeans for loaning their art collections and persuaded themselves that inexpensive copies of European masterpieces would well do for the 'natives'.[56] Having satisfied themselves that an official control was established over popular taste, the officials now took care to improve the practical skill of Indian art students. To equip the artists for an accurate depiction of the contemporary scene, arrangements were made for students to copy from casts of Indian tribals, and Botanical drawings of Indian flora and fauna. This came to be known as the 'Indianization' of the art curriculum.[57]

The results of the colonial art policy were felt in two ways. First, it succeeded in creating a petty bureaucracy of artists who now filled the survey offices and printing presses. Second, the secularised education succeeded in breaking the caste restrictions on artisans.[58] The works that were now churned out from the studies that were set up in North Calcutta Localities of Bowbazar and Garanhata were images of the Puranic gods and Epic heroes, painted in the Western Academic manner. Men like B. P. Banerjee, belonging to the lower middle class Brahmin families, adopted 'the arts' as their profession. Their works were taken to Germany and brought back to India as Oleographs. A generation of hack painters now lived by making these paintings for prints, chiefly emulating Raja Ravi Varma, (an artist from the South) whose work had become immensely popular. His prints of the gods flooded the

market. These not only attracted the urban middle class, but also the rural poor. Ravi Varma's prints and the German oleographs made from paintings produced in the Chorbagan and Garanhata studios comp'etely altered the schema of popular perception. What now came to be accepted as art by all classes of Indians were paintings complete in the last illusionist details. While the rich hung oil paintings in their drawing rooms, the urban poor and the villages decorated their hutments with glossy prints. It was the undoubted popularity of these paintings which Havell considered as a 'debasement of taste'[59] and Coomaraswamy as 'captivity of the soul'.[60] Thus while the British officials congratulated themselves on their achievements of having taught the 'Indians to see', the vision so dearly cherished by Morris and upheld by Havell came to be slowly destroyed.

In a desperate bid for reform Havell tried to restructure the art courses followed in the Calcutta Art College.[61] He threw out of the gallery the 'junk' collected by his predecessors on the plea of lack of space. He filled it with Mughal and Pahari miniatures. He then invited two Indians of completely different social status to join the Government Art College as teachers. Lala Iswari Prasad (who worked with D'Oyly in his printing press at Patna) was brought in as the last surviving Mughal artist, while Abanindranath Tagore was presented as the only Indian artist who could continue the great art traditions of his country. Havell's measures evoked a strong reaction. He was regarded as an eccentric British Orientalist who interfered with the 'bread and butter' opprtunities of the art school-trained-Indian artist.[62]

Thus even as Lala Iswari Prasad and Abanindranath joined the Government art school as teachers, a number of artists under the leadership of Ranadaprasad Gupta left to form the Jubilee Art School, where they could practise in an unhampered manner their studies of perspective, light and shades and copies of live models.[63] The ability to create illusions of nature was regarded by the British —trained Indian artists as the 'Real art', while the second group, though a minority, led by Abanindranath and Havell tried to revive India's lost 'Great Art tradition' as the true Indian art, without which Indians could not claim having as glorious a history as that of the Europeans.

Even as Indians realized (by 1905) the irreconcilability of Indian and British interests a lively debate started among the intelligentsia as to what should be considered as the true 'Indian Art'. The period of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal was characterised by a lively debate in the 'forms' of visual arts, which was definitely polarised into traditionalist and modernist views.[64]

Men like Benoy Sarkar, keen on doing away with what they considered to be traditionalist constraints on contemporary Indian art, tried to place it in a universal perspective. Sarkar equated ancient Indian art with Greek and Roman art, thus reinforcing the Orientalist views.[65] On the other hand, the conservatives articulated through Akshay Maitra, (a well-known Bengali historian) their disapproval of the artistic experiments conducted by Abanindranath Tagore and his pupils. Maitra propagated the views of the Hindu revivalists who located their golden age, the historical Ram Rajya, in the period prior to 1200 A.D. Both the traditionalists and the modernists however united in their demands for a 'national Indian art', in both form and theme.[66]

These debates expressed the aspirations of a class, who in Bengal developed a self awareness as the madhyabitta (the middle class). Their model of the artist was derived from the British aesthetic norms and reinforced by their English education. The artist was expected to possess an individual style, and at the same time express the hopes of a people engaged in the search for a glorious civilisation. Art was equated in this period with Hindu religion (encompassing the Brahmanical, the Buddhist and the Jain), and a strong religious motivation was ascribed to the artist.

Art now assumed the importance of being one of the major media through which the anti-colonial struggle could be waged. The art form which was hailed as 'National' by one section of the Bengali intelligentsia and the British media (1910) came to be known as the Bengal school. Its major exponents were Abanindranath and his students.

Responding to the multiple demands placed on him, Abanindranath first crossed his private domain of a leisured gentleman, to take up the post of the art teacher and the Vice Principal in the

Government Art College, Calcutta. He soon left it to start a voluntary association of artists and art lovers in the country, Bangiya Kala Samsad (September 1905) and then Society of Oriental Art (1907). From the beginning these organisations were composed of Bengali elites (from the Landholder's Association) and several Europeans like Justice Woodroffe and James Cousin, an art critic. The aim of the Society was to generate an interest in ancient Indian art, and for this exhibitions were arranged and later an art school was set up under its auspices.[67]

Much more effective in disseminating the ideals of art was the residence at Jorasanko of Abanindranath and his brothers, Gaganendranath and Samarendranath. Here any one interested in Abanindranath's experiments with the traditional art forms was welcome.[68] A school now grew around Abanindranath, and his 'new style of painting' (the *Naba Chitrakala Paddhati*') generated interest among a large number of professionals and amateurs alike. It was closely emulated by a number of people and Abanindranath came to be acknowledged generally as the master or 'Guru'.[69]

Abanindranath began painting when the schema of perception in Western Art was being revolutionised through the rejection of the 'mimetic principles' (dominant since the Italian Renaissance). He along with a number of artists (in India and Europe), were looking for an alternative.[70] His first attempt, the 'Radha Krishna Series', came to be inspired by two albums of late provincial Mughal miniatures and Irish illuminations [71] Here the visual world was encapsulated in a picture space, where the illusionist techniques of the European oil painting were largely modified.

Abanindranath's rejection of the European principles of painting became more pronounced when he learnt, and applied the Japanese 'wash technique'.[72] By controlling the depiction of light, the motifs, both objects in the landscape and human portraits, become diffused. A dream-like quality gave the paintings a special characteristic.

A formula or canon was erected by both Abanindranath and his critics during 1905-1910. The form supported a definite iconography, where the sign language of the art form carried the image,

which became significant to the audience through the religious and historical associations of the period.

The 'Abhisarika' (1897-1900), considered as one of the best expressions of Abanindranath's genius, can be taken as the embodiment of the new art formula. The white-draped, wild-blown, slender figure which emerges from the dark background, is illuminated by a light from within. She is juxtaposed against the dark background which suggests night, danger, fear and emptiness to the Indian viewer acquainted with Vaishnava poetry.

The model derived obviously from the medieval Indian miniatures (Pahari paintings) has certain distinct qualities which separates her from the conventional portrayals of the Nayikas. The figure suggests by her gestures certain continued motions (This resembles one of the depictions of Radha in Indian miniatures). She represents the eternal devotee in a constant search for the God who rules the spiritual world (*Sundari ab kaisė karaba abhisāra ... Hari Rahė mānasa suradhonī paār*).

The painting evoked a warm response from Abanindranath's contemporaries. They discovered in the painting a projection of their spiritual needs. To followers of Abanindranath's style of art this female figure became a stereotype. Preceived as the embodiment of an idea, the female form was shorn of all physicality. This was in contrast to the projection of the 'woman image' in the classical murals of Ajanta and Bāgh (4th-5th century A.D), which represented the abundant energies of nature. Thus 'the Abhisarika, hailed as the continuation of a traditional 'form', actually represented a rupture of the links with the ancient Indian art form. The painting introduced through a certain obvious resemblance to medieval miniatures a new interpretation. The result was to be seen in some of the later works of Indian artists and critics who now evaluated all Indian art on the basis of the 'Mystic quality' so well portrayed in Abanindranath's works.

The two paintings which (more than the others) came to be regarded as the beginning of this nationalist Iconography are Abanindranath's 'The Passing of Sahajahan' (1900 02) and the 'Bharat Mata' (1905).

'The passing of Shahjahan' was painted in oil on wood. The painting shows an inner room visible through the awnings caused by two front pillars covered with rich decorations. The viewer's eyes move over to the centrally placed bed, on which rests the shrunken figure of an old man. At his feet sits a veiled woman. The eyes pass over the figures, through the open space to rest on the Tajmahal visible through the window. The old man on the bed is also seen to have his head turned in that direction. The only solidity in the painting is expressed through the pillars and their decorations point to the grandeur of the country art. The central figure by its gestures and shrunken stature symbolises death. The Tajmahal which attracts and keeps the viewer's most serious attention suggests the immortal victory of art over life.

This painting won the Delhi Durbar prize in 1902. Seen in terms of art history it was an experiment in the History painting convention, so popular in Victorian England. Asked to comment on the painting Abanindranth declared that he had tried to depict the overpowering personal sorrow caused by the recent death of a daughter of his.[73]

Recognising the central figure to be Shahjahan his critics read into it an allegorical message: "another picture of great importance is the Passing of Shahjahan, the tenderness and grace and an unapproachable Indianness of these delicate colours is overwhelming. They are the perfect expression of Indian conceptions in any universal language."[74]

The permanent epithet 'Nationalist' was fixed to the works of Abanindranath from the date of the 'Bharat Mata' (1905). It was in the wash technique, and it depicted a woman figure draped in an ochre robe, with four hands slightly stretched out holding a corn, a book, a cloth and a rosary. She stands almost suspended from space in a diffused background. (Once again the artist is seen to be experimenting with both space and light.) The subdued colours of pale blue or grey green from the background, from which the figure emerges to the surface, suggests water, the sky and the atmosphere. While popular Swadeshi songs filled the air, a common rapport was established with audience who recognised in the four arms, the

symbols of the Goddess of Wealth who had risen from the Ocean, The whole effect created was that of an divine appearance.

To the non-Indian, the rendition pattern of the central figure depended on certain geometric configurations. The two triangles which intersected to form a star, are used in the formation of the mother figure. Thus the painting carefully constructed served the basic needs of a new iconography. It was recognised by its relational association with the Hindu mother goddess. Its historical context made it an appropriate symbol in an intense nationalist fervour which was mainly 'Hindu' in its emotional manifestations.

Sister Nivedita noticed in the image a manifestation of that 'Mystic essence' which had dominated ancient Indian art. In a tone of religious preaching she wrotes — "How can a man be a painter of nationality? Can an abstract idea be given form and clothed with flesh and painted? Undoubtedly it can; indeed, if we had questioned this, Abanindranath Tagore's exquisite picture of 'Bharat mata' would have proved its possibility."[75]

That this was the beginning of a new art, which was needed for a people struggling for political and cultural freedom, is best underlined in Coomaraswamy's preface to the *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* written mainly by Nivedita. Here he made it clear, that Abanindranath and his students had been asked to illustrate Indian myths, because they had acquired the responsibility of being nationalist artists, by adopting a form which revealed the 'idea' behind the appearance. It was also suggested that as artists well-acquainted with the myths from their childhood, "they would be well able to suggest their material and social environment". By pointing out that the myths, retold in the book, have already been illustrated in Indian sculpture and painting, Coomaraswamy laid the foundations of that 'Iconography' which would be considered as a continuation of the 'Classical Indian Art'.[76]

By 1910 European opinion in general came round to the Orientalist view and perceived in the ancient Indian art forms the attributes of a lost civilisation. In the works of Abanindranath and his students they noticed its rejuvenation. "While opposed to the

mechanical stereotyping of particular traditional forms, we consider that in only an organic development from the national art of the past that the path of true progress is to be found."[77]

For Indians the great power of this 'Indianness' pervaded all creative acts. While Abanindranath moved into new experiments, exploring folk forms (for instance, in the *Kavikankan Chandi* series) and incorporating his daily experiences in Jorasanko, in his works (as in *The Arabian Nights*), his critics clung tenaciously to that 'spiritual strength' and 'mystic essence' which they had hailed in his early works.

For the later Indian artists this national art form proved to be a cage, incapable of portraying the contemporary realities of a nationalist struggle. In its emotive content, it reflected the 'Orientalist' demands for a revived art heritage, from which the Indian artist could no logner claim a linear descent. Rather his search for identity lay enmeshed in this severed tradition.

NOTES

1. P. Mitter, *The Much Maligned Monsters*, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 106-107.
2. F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1967), p. 48.
3. I. Habib, 'Colonialisation of Indian Economy (1757-1900)', in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, no. 8. March, 1975.
4. *Ibid.*
5. P. Mitter, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.
6. *Ibid*, p. 176.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
9. *Ibid*, p. 251.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-238.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-251.
12. W. Morris *Collected Works*, (London, 1915), p. xxx, quoted in P. Mitter, P. 250.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid*, pp. 230-231.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-35.
17. Alexander Hunter, *The Government Correspondence on the Subject of the Extension of Art Education in different parts of India*, Secretariat Library, West Bengal, 1867.
18. P. Mitter, *op. cit.*, pp 82-83.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-121.
20. E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, 1978) p. 1.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
23. E. B. Havell, "The Depth of Indian Unrest" (a typed article in the Havell Files, Rabindra Bhavan, Viswa Bharati), p. 9.
24. E. B. Havell, *The Basis of Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, (Madras, 1922), Chs., II, III, VII.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
26. *Ibid.*, Ch. IV : *Fine Art and its Revival in India*, pp. 34-56.
27. P. Mitter argues that it was mainly the current neo-Platonist theories in Europe which had influenced Havell.
28. L. Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, (New York, 1964), p. 234-236.
29. E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, (Londdn, 1907), Preface.
30. E. B. Havell, *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, op. cit., p. 46.
31. E. B. Havell, "Open Letter to Educated Indians", Havell File No. 2, Vol. I, 1904, p. 60.
32. E. B. Havell, *Aryan, Rule in India*, New Delhi, Introduction pp. V-VIII.
33. P. Mitter, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
34. E. B. Havell, *Aryan Rule, op. cit.*
35. John Murray, 'A review of the 'Himalayas in Indian Art' by E. B. Havell', in *Times Literary Supplement*, 19th February, 1925
36. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in National Idealism*, December, 1909 (Indian ed., 1981), Ch. I, p. 6.
37. *Ibid.*, Preface.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, Ch. IV, p. 23.
42. A. K. Coomaraswamy : *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, (Harvard University, Press, 1934), (Dover Edition), New York, 1956 Ch. III.

43. *Ibid.*, Chaps. III, IV, V, VII, VIII, pp. iii-153.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Kakuzo Okakura, *The Ideals of the East, with Special Reference to Art of Japan*, (London, 1903), Indian edition, Calcutta, 1973, p. 129.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-137.
49. Laurence Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, (London, 1911), pp. 7-18.
50. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit., Essays in National Idealism*, pp. 91-96.
51. A. K. Commaraswamy, *Art and Swadeshi*, Madras, 1910, pp. 3-4.
52. Kakuzo Okakura, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-75.
53. P. Mitter, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 270. *The Times*, 28th February 1910.
55. A. Hunter, *Correspondence on the subject of the Extension of Art Education* loc. cit.
56. *Ibid*, Concluding part of the Correspondence.
57. *Ibid.*. Minute by Richard Temple, Lt. Governor of Bengal, 15th February 1876.
58. *Ibid.* Report on the general progress of Art Education by A. Hunter, 1865-66.
59. E. B. Havell, *Aryan Rule*, op. cit., p. v.
60. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in National Idealism*, op. cit., p. 6.
61. Education Proceedings, 1904. Letter from E. B. Havell (ARCA), Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta to the D.P.I., Bengal, dated 20th March, 1904.
62. Benode Behari Mukhopadhyay, *Adhunik Shilpa Shiksha* (in Bengali), (Visva Bharati, 1972), p. 18.
63. *Idid.*
64. Akshay Maitra, *Bharat Shilpa Katha* (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1982), p. 70.
65. Benoy Sarkar, *Aesthetics of Young India*, (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 5-10.
66. Akshay Maitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-4.
67. Benode Behari Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
69. O. C. Ganguly, *Bharat Shilpa O Amar Katha* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1969, pp. 151-169.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

71. Alokendranath Tagore, *Chhabir Raja Aban Thakur* (Bengali), Calcutta, pp. 20-21.
72. Abanindranath had learnt the 'Wash technique' from the Japanese artist Okakura.
73. Alokendranath Tagore. *op. cit.*, p. 37.
74. Sister Nivedita, 'Function of Art in shaping Nationality' in *Modern Review*, Vol. I, 1907, p. 128,
75. *Ibid.*, p. 492.
76. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*, Preface.
77. Letters to the Editor of *The Times*, 21st February 1910 (Havell File No. 2, Vol. 2).

TOWARDS A CORPORATE PLURALIST SOCIETY: CASTE AND COLONIAL POLICY OF PROTECTIVE DISCRIMINATION IN BENGAL, 1911-1937

SEKHAR BANDYOPADHYAY

I

Between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries, British Orientalists, civilian ethnographers and census superintendents had managed to establish and regularize what Bernard Cohn has called 'a discourse of differentiations'. In order to comprehend the vast social world of India, they had tried to classify it into certain fixed categories and objectify them. The first thing that attracted their attention was religious differentiation and the two major religious communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, were taken to be two distinct social groups, structurally separated, with different heritage, traditions, legal systems, customs and convictions, with no commonness whatsoever. Then within the Hindu community another form of structural separation was discovered and that is caste. The Hindu society was stereotyped as a permanently stratified one with a central dichotomy between the privileged higher castes at the one end and the depressed lower castes and the untouchables at the other, reflecting the age-old imbalances in the distribution of socio-economic opportunities. All these social groups were carefully ordinated, quantified and mapped for ready administrative reference and easy comprehension by the alien rulers, unaccustomed to this unique and therefore exotic social system.[1]

As a result, this stereotype gradually began to influence colonial policy planning in Bengal, particularly when the high caste Hindu *bhadralok* began to question the legitimacy of the Raj at the turn of the century. In order to contain the intensifying anti-imperialist agitation, the British first tried to rally the Muslims, and then with equal consistency, sought to mobilize the Hindu depressed classes in support of their rule. And this they did by evolving a policy of

'protective discrimination', that sought to grant special favour in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights, first to the Muslims and then to the 'depressed classes', later called the 'Scheduled Castes'. The Bengal Government at the beginning was a bit hesitant to carry on the policy in regard to the Scheduled Castes, primarily because of its preoccupation with the Muslims who were politically more important in this province. But eventually the Government of India, which was looking at the situation from an all-India perspective, persuaded it to adopt such a policy. Thus Bengal, along with the rest of the country, moved towards a corporate pluralist society, where ethnic or caste status of individuals was taken into consideration for distributing official patronage. The policy was partly to redress the existing social imbalances, and partly to draw the attention of the larger Hindu community away from the growing nationalist movement. For such a policy would further encourage structural pluralism, which could then be taken advantage of to popularize India's colonial connection.

The situation suggests that the impact of British rule on the structure of Indian society was deeper than has been allowed by some historians, who argue that traditional social forces were not substantially altered by the colonial impact. Of course caste existed before and the British did not create it. Nor could ever the lower castes of Bengal, particularly the untouchables, fully identify themselves, socially or culturally, with the high caste Hindus. The Muslims had already developed a social and cultural identity of their own and distinct from that of the Hindus [2] So did many of the lower castes vis-a-vis the high caste Hindus, to some extent. But what was essentially a social and cultural dichotomy, was now given a definite political shape. A conflict of socio-cultural identity was transformed into a conflict of interests. The civilian ethnographic perception of a system of ritualised ethnic division of an antagonistic character thus became a reality — largely as a result of British appointment policies, constitutional and electoral arrangements, political and administrative innovations. The impact of the official policy was thus deeper and more fundamental than we sometimes admit. The present paper seeks to trace how the policy took shape and evoled during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

II

The first major direct initiative to develop a separate identity among the depressed classes came on the eve of the census of 1911. The new Census Commissioner, in his letter to the Provincial Superintendents in May, 1910, pointed out that there will be no classification of castes according to social precedence. But in another circular, dated 12 July 1910, he asked for separate classification of the 'depressed classes'.[3] Gait, Provincial Superintendent in Bengal, accordingly issued a circular announcing separate enumeration of the 'depressed classes' in the coming census. It at once became the target of attack by the nationalists, who saw in it a sinister political motive, allegedly prompted by the Muslim League. It was designed, they thought, to reduce the numerical superiority of the Hindus by the non-recognition in the approaching census of certain untouchable castes as members of Hindu society. The measure was perhaps designed not merely to aggravate the existing Hindu-Muslim political dichotomy, as the nationalists suspected, but also to politicise another social dichotomy, that between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. The circular met with a strong opposition from all sections of the Hindu press, and the interference of both the retiring and the in-coming Viceroys was sought in the matter.[4] Surendranath Banerjee, on behalf of the Indian Association, sent a memorandum to the Government of India, urging the withdrawal of the notorious circular, which had created a "painful impression" in the mind of the Hindu community. He also objected to the classification of castes according to social precedence and the use of such derogatory adjectives, as "low castes" or "unclean castes" in the census reports. "It is not understood what good such a classification is intended to serve", he pointed out, "but the mischief sure to attend its appearance in an authorized Government publication is obvious". His other objection was against imposing rigidity on an otherwise dynamic system, by denying individuals and communities the opportunity of returning themselves under new titles and new caste-names.[5] It was indeed an age-old practice in India[6] which colonial ethnographers overlooked. And it is no wonder, that Government, relying heavily on their conclusions, sought to frame their policies on the assumption of a static status hierarchy with permanent social divisions.

However, the storm raised by the nationalists forced the Government to retreat, although temporarily. The circular was withdrawn through a press communique on 10 December 1910, which stated that there would be no departure from the established practice regarding enumeration of castes.[7] And the Education Member, Butler, declared in the Imperial Legislative Council on 3 January 1911, that the opinion expressed by the Census Commissioner reflected his personal views and that the government did not identify itself with them.[8]

Such attempts at classification of Hindu society was the result of a continuing shift in the colonial policy towards protective discrimination in favour of certain social groups, whose loyalty had to be ensured in order to balance off the influence of the nationalists. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the nationalist movement had become identified with a section of the higher castes of Bengal, if not in reality, at any rate, in the perception of the Raj. The partition of the province in 1905, was designed, among other things, to strike at the root of the power of these high caste Bengali *bhadralok*. And accordingly, the new administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, through its education and employment policies, sought to destroy, what Richard Cronin has called the "class rule" by the Hindu landowning, money-lending, professional and clerical classes, mainly belonging to the three highest Bengali castes, the Brahmans, the Kayasthas and the Baidyas. The draft Resolution which Sir Lancelot Hare, the second Lieutenant-Governor of the new province submitted to Lord Minto on 31 October 1906, emphasized "the frequent exclusion in many offices of all but a few castes of Hindus" which had "sometimes gone so far as to make of some offices almost a family gathering." The other communities, particularly the Muslims, did not get their dues as a result, and their interests had to be protected. Minto approved of the Resolution, when Risley, Home Secretary, strongly supported it.[9] Hereafter, protective discrimination in favour of the Muslims became a regular feature of British policy. And the Muslims in return became the strongest supporters of the Raj in Bengal, except during the short interregnum of the Khilafat movement.

Parallel to this, the colonial government was also gradually moving towards a similar policy in relation to some of the lower

caste Hindus, who were also backward in comparison with the high caste *bhadralok*, and therefore, could be used to weaken the nationalist movement. The area where the government first concentrated its attention was of course education. For it was education alone which could elevate the status of these people and would enable them to compete with the *bhadralok*. Accordingly, in the early years of the twentieth century, the government committed itself to what Nilratan Sarkar described in 1913 as "a policy of affording special facilities in matters of education to comparatively non-progressive sections."[10]

Hitherto, education of the lower caste people had been left to the endeavours of Christian missionaries. The government provided only a handful of special scholarships for a loose category of people known as the "backward classes", covering disparate social groups.[11] The scholarships, as Kuchler, Director of Public Instruction, admitted in 1913, were not expressly given for the 'depressed classes', but for a much wider range of boys. But they were open to the 'depressed classes' as well. Had there been more funds, as he acknowledged, "a great deal more" would have been done in this direction.[12]

In this connection, however, the Director of Public Instruction announced in the Bengal Legislative Council, that "Government has long been alive to the necessity of making some provision for the education of what are called the depressed classes ..... [or] the classes that belong to the very lowest classes of the Hindu social system, or are outside the pale of caste altogether". The main problem regarding their education was not merely poverty, for poverty was not peculiar to them alone. It was rather a problem of "social ostracism" and their "general indifference to education."[13] And to solve these, the government had taken some special measures as well.

In Bengal, so far as primary education was concerned, the boys of the 'depressed classes' did not face any difficulty in the matter of admission. Moreover, to attract pupils of these classes, the government either admitted them free or gave a capitation grant to the individual *guru mahasays*. And at the same time, in localities where

these classes happend to be settled in large numbers, the government opened special schools.[14] In 1912-13, the Government of India sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs. 9,42,000 for elementary education in Bengal. This grant had to be spent largely on the extension of free elementary education for those who could not afford to pay fees, "the poorer and more backward sections of the population". Moreover, the Government of India had also provided a non-recurring grant of Rs. 3,65,000, out of which a sum of Rs. 30,000 was spent on schools in backward areas.[15] These schools either charged no fees, or fees far lower than those paid in ordinary schools. As a result of all these measures, as Samman, the next Director of Public Instruction announced in the Bengal Legislative Council on 28 February 1914, one-third of the boys attending primary schools in eastern Bengal and one-tenth in western Bengal "were reading practically free."[16] A large section of these recipients of government patronage difinitely belonged to the 'depressed classes'.

So far as high school education is concerned, there were 39 government high schools in Bengal around the year 1913[17] And there was no rule barring admission of pupils whether on grounds of nationality, sect or caste. But however careful the government might have been about observing absolute neutrality in matters of admission, there were, as an official admitted, cases of indirect or concealed discrimination. For, "all over the world Head Masters prefer[red] boys of a good class to 'outsiders'."[18] Nevertheless, the government did whatever they could, at the given situation, to improve education of these boys. Schools situated in the backward areas where given larger aid.[19] In 1915, certain classes of lower primary, upper primary, middle vernacular, middle English junior and senior scholarships were reserved for the 'backward classes'. Under the revised rules, one graduate scholarship tenable at Dacca College was reserved for either a Muslim or a member of a 'backward class'. Apart from this, there were two college scholarships, two junior scholarships, six school scholarships, six upper primary scholarships and fourteen lower primary scholarships, all distributed in three eastern Bengal divisions, Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi, were reserved for the boys of the 'backward classes'. There were also five engineering scholarships tenable at Dacca

College of Engineering, reserved for the Muslims and members of the 'backward classes'.[20] Moreover, the government expenditure on the "education of the backward classes" also leaped enormously during these years — from Rs. 19,732 in 1914-15 to Rs. 36,929 in 1915-16. And this amount was over and above the cost of reserved scholarships.[21]

As a result, the number of "pupils of aboriginal descent or drawn from depressed classes" was increasing gradually.[22] But still the great difficulty which the students of these communities had to experience was in the matter of hostel accommodation. The problem of untouchability and segregation was there as before and hence separate hostels had to be provided for these students. The government also came forward in this field and established or aided a number of special hostels for these boys, especially in eastern Bengal, during 1913-14. For Namasudras, hostels were opened at Jhalakati, Pirojpur and Barisal in Bakarganj district, at Orakandi in Faridpur district, in Dacca for boys reading in Dacca College and in Rajshahi for those studying in Rajshahi College. Apart from these, there were hostels for Jogis in Chittagong and Comilla, for Rajbansis at Rangpur and for Mahishyas in Dacca. Other proposals were also under consideration. All these hostels were either fully financed or partly subsidised by the government and the boarders were charged either no fees, or nominal fees. There was also a demand for such a hostel in Calcutta. But the government hoped that the Calcutta problem would be taken care of by Calcutta University which had already been administering its own mess scheme.[23]

The attention of the Bengal government was, however, more closely drawn to the question of the 'depressed classes' in 1916. In March that year, M. B. Dadabhoy moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council, recommending that measures should be devised for the amelioration of the moral, material and educational conditions of the depressed classes. Although the resolution was ultimately withdrawn, the Government of India, on this occasion, wanted to consult the local governments about this important issue. The latter were asked to provide information regarding the actual castes and tribes that could be grouped under this category and their

numbers, the nature of disabilities that existed, the measures that had already been taken for their moral and material improvement, and what more could be done in future.[24]

To the Bengal government, the most baffling question related to definition of 'depressed classes'. For, as an official frankly confessed : "we have not found any authoritative definition of the expression". It was not certainly synonymous with the expression "backward classes" which was much more comprehensive. In England, material condition furnished the main criterion of judging the depressed status, while the Government of India adopted other criteria, such as social degradation, educational backwardness, aboriginal descent, and hereditary criminal propensities. And accordingly, they adopted the classification of the Bombay government which stipulated that 'depressed classes' should include three social and ethnic groups : (i) the untouchables, (ii) the aboriginal and hill tribes, and (iii) the criminal tribes. The Bengal government accepted the difinition, although this classification was not regarded "suitable to Bengal, where many of the classes referred to cannot be called depressed except as regards sacial ostracism". Moreover, the Government of India did not state definitely what they meant by the untouchables. As the census enquiries of 1911 had revealed, their position in the Hiudu society of Bengal depended on a number of finer distinctions of social behaviour. For the present purpose, however, the Bengal government decided to ignore these niceties and classified only those who caused pollution by touch or presence within a certain distance. The census of 1911 had provided ample information about such groups which contributed more than one per mille of the general population of Bengal. And on that basis, a list was prepared and sent to the Government of India.[25] A task which could not be fulfilled in 1911 due to public protest was now secretly accomplished.

The list included twenty-one "Untouchable Hindu and Animist Castes or Tribes," six "Aboriginal and Hill tribes" and four "Criminal Tribes"—thirty-one social groups in all.[26] But as O'Malley, who prepared the list, had himself admitted, it was full of anomalies which could not be avoided in the absence of any concrete and

objective criterion. The Jogis and the Rajbansis, for example, were not covered by the definition of the 'depressed classes' and therefore, could not be included in the list, although the Education department considered them as 'backward classes'. On the other hand, many of the groups included in the list were "now at a fairly satisfactory level of education". Thus preparation of such a list, as O'Malley apprehended, tended "to stereotype a state of affairs", which was gradually changing itself and in no time would have little relevance to reality.[27]

In Bengal, as the government reported, the social structure was "not so rigid and inflexible as elsewhere". And whatever the existing disability, the government preferred to rely on "the good sense of the community" for their "gradual disappearance". So far as positive action was concerned, it had been "their consistent policy to extend and improve education among the depressed classes". A number of steps had also been taken in this direction, and if the government could not do more, it was only because of "want of funds". The Government of Bengal, however, thought, at least at this stage, "that the material betterment of these classes must depend on the general progress of the province, and that there is no particular reason why government should intervene to give special facilities to individual classes". The problem of the depressed classes till now was not perhaps up in the priority list of the Bengal government. The more "urgent problem of Bengal", they thought, was "to bring the Muhammadans into a state of educational equality with the Hindus". Together with this there had also been the burden of other reforms of a more general character. And these two programmes were regarded "for some time to come [to] be the first care of Government". Before accomplishing these, it seemed to be undesirable to take up any other large or expensive scheme.[28] However, it was also from this period onward that the government of Bengal began to rearrange their priorities, and gradually shifted towards a deeper commitment to a policy of positive action for ameliorating the condition of the depressed classes and the Muslims. Iniatially though, they relied on the non-government agencies, as far as possible.

The enquiry in 1916 had revealed that a number of non-government voluntary organisations had been working among the

depressed classes.[29] And they did commendable work without any government assistance, although in 1915-16 the government had given Rs. 12,000 to the Christian missionaries for the spread of education among backward classes.[30] The most notable of these organisations was certainly the Bengal Depressed Classes Mission, which had recently changed its name to Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes. The Society had already spread its network far and wide — it had been running schools in about seven districts of eastern Bengal.[31] And as the government realised, it was doing "pioneer work in a direction which had not hitherto received adequate attention from either local bodies or inspecting officers". Hence its enthusiasm had to be recognised and patronized, in order to derive some benefit from its work. In 1918, the Secretary of the Society applied for a recurring grant of Rs. 5,000,[32] which was sanctioned in October that year. But the Society was not any more allowed to function independently. The conditions that were imposed on it, along with the grant, subjected it to close government inspection and virtually made it a government agency.[33]

In May 1918, the attention of the government was also drawn to the necessity of establishing special hostels for the students of the depressed classes residing in Calcutta—a problem which did not seem to be that urgent four years ago. Now, as "an experimental measure", the government decided to start two special messes in Calcutta, one for the Jogis and the other for the Namasudras, each under a resident superintendent. But the responsibility had to be undertaken by Calcutta University, which was to be provided with a special grant of Rs. 3,000 per annum for this purpose.[34] The messes were started in July in two rented houses and in view of the poverty of the majority of the boarders they were charged only nominal seat rents.[35]

Apart from this, various trust funds were also being utilised for opening schools for the depressed classes. One of the objects of the Newson Trust was to establish primary schools for the depressed classes in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. Out of this fund, in December 1919, it was decided to establish three schools, two for boys and one for girls in the Diamond Harbour sub-division of

the 24-Parganas.[36] In April next year, another school was opened in the same district out of the Sussex Trust.[37] By far the most important measure adopted in this direction was the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919, which provided for both voluntary and compulsory education. However, its basic principle was that compulsory education would be introduced at a later stage, after proper arrangements had been made for primary education on a voluntary basis. Moreover, it was applicable only to the municipalities and only subsequently might it be extended to selected unions.[38] The Act, therefore, failed to benefit the depressed classes immediately, as most of them lived in rural areas and were traditionally, less enthusiastic about education.

III

A more important question around this time was that of representation of the depressed classes in the legislature. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, had accepted the principle of special electorates to protect the interests of particular communities. And this brought the question of the lower castes from the realm of philanthropy to the arena of politics, particularly because the nationalists at this time were demanding a higher degree of self-government and the British were opposing such demands by citing "the necessity for protecting minorities".[39] However, the constitutional reforms were being talked about, and in such talks the 'depressed classes' figured prominently. The Franchise (Southborough) Committee recommended for Bengal nomination of one representative of the depressed classes who would put up their views before the Council and point out where the depressed class interests were being affected.[40] The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee appointed to consider the Government of India bill of 1919, however, observed that "the representation proposed for the depressed classes is inadequate". For, this definition covered "a large proportion of the whole population of India." They, therefore, recommended for such classes "a larger share of representation by nomination, regard being had to the numbers of depressed classes in each province ..." This representation should, if necessary, be in addition to, but not at the cost of, the general electorate.[41] The report on Indian

Constitutional Reforms spelled out this policy in more categorical terms : "we intend to make the best arrangements that we can for their representation in order that they too may ultimately learn the lesson of self-protection. But if it is found that their interests suffer, and that they do not share in the general progress, we must retain the means in our hands of helping them."[42]

The Government of Bengal was also alive to the problem of the depressed classes, although this problem was not as acute in Bengal as elsewhere as the Chief Secretary, Kerr, observed in his evidence before the Franchise Committee. And therefore he suggested that if necessary, they could be represented by nomination.[43] In October 1918, the Government of Bengal noted that under any ordinary electoral scheme, "it is more than likely that the higher castes, and the legal profession will continue to prevail" and hence the backward castes required "special consideration". In the franchise proposal submitted in December 1918, they suggested that the Governor should have the power to nominate four non-official members from these classes, whose services would be useful in the Council but who would be unlikely to stand for election in any electorate that may be set up.[44] The Government of India also preferred to provide four seats for the depressed classes, because a single member would be "rather lonely in the Council and would not be able to do much for his community".[45] But the Bengal government subsequently revised their position and considered it "unnecessary to earmark four seats for depressed classes". They did not want to allot nominated seats to specified interests before the elections. Increase in the total council membership was out of question, for that would "upset carefully calculated proportions and lead to fresh difficulties".[46]

The Government of India Act of 1919 formally recognised the 'special needs' of the depressed classes by including a representative from these classes among the fourteen nominated non-official members in the Central Legislative Assembly. In the provincial legislatures, they were represented by four nominees in the Central Provinces, two each in the Bombay and Bihar and one each in Bengal and the United Provinces. But the Government of India was not very happy with just one nominated member in Bengal which

contained a large untouchable population. Hence in January 1920 they suggested the reservation of one or two more nominated seats for them, if the Government of Bengal so desired.[47] But the latter apprehended difficulties in going by population ratio alone. First of all, they were not certain as to "what castes would come within the definition of depressed classes". The enumeration of 1917 showed a population of 7 million for such classes, out of a total 45 million population in the province. And therefore, population ratio would entitle them to about one-seventh of the seats in the Council, i.e., 15, which was a far larger number than proposed by the Government of India and was "practically out of question in view of their relative importance". Moreover, the enumeration itself was not final or beyond doubt.[48] The next important reference to their number was to be found in the Seventh Quinquennial Review on the progress of education in India for 1912-1917, in which an estimated number of the depressed classses was given by Sir Henry Sharp, Education Commissioner for India. He included the same castes as O'Malley's report did in 1917, but the population figure he arrived at was 6·7 million. And then the Franchise Committee Report estimated the untouchable population figure for Bengal at 9·9 million.[49] Moreover, of the untouchables, only the Namasudras were articulate in demanding such special representation and suitable non-officials could perhaps be found to represent them, but the Government doubted whether such non-official representatives could be found for other castes. And given the numerical strength of the Namasudras and that of the Mahishyas too, these two castes were also expected to win some seats in the general constituencies as well.[50] Hence, under such confusing circumstances, the Government of Bengal decided that one nominated seat proposed by the Franchise Committee was sufficient.[51]

But the issue was once again raised in 1925, in view of the report of the Reforms Enquiry (Muddiman) Committee of 1924. The Committee refused to sanction any general widening of the franchise on the ground of lack of practical training of the electorate. But it was unanimous in its opinion that further representation of the depressed classes was required. The Government of India wanted to know the opinion of the Bengal Government and invited its views

on whether suitable methods could be formulated for the representation of these classes by election.[52] But the latter was not in favour of such an extension. The main difficulty, they pointed out, was "about the framing of a suitable franchise", and a "suitable electorate", for there were as yet "no data as to the number of electors from these classes". The government were still not sure "as to who are to be included" in the list of 'depressed classes'. The Calcutta University Commission in 1919 had prepared a list of such castes as were educationally depressed. But the list did not include certain other castes, such as the Mahishyas, Rajbansis, Kapalis or Jogis, many of whom might not have been educationally backward, but in other respect deserved and demanded special protection.[53] The Census of 1921 made a fresh estimate of the poulation of such classes, and took into account many castes which were not so classified previously, such as the Mahishya, Rajbansi, Jalia Kaibartta, Kalu, Khandait, Kurmi etc. But even then, the list did not include either the Kapalis or the Jogis, the Sunris or the Dhobas. and the Dosadhs who were classed as depressed in 1917. Although it was acknowledged that it was not easy to define 'depressed classes', the confusion came to a head when the Census Commissioner for India did not accept the classification made by the Census Superintendent for Bengal. And this was evident from the fact that while the latter estimated the number of depressed classes in Bengal at about 11½ million, the former at only 9 million.[54]

Under the existing confusion, therefore, it was really difficult to form a separate electorate for certain widely scattered listed castes, setting them apart from the other unlisted castes situated in a similar condition and above all, denying the same privilege to the Muslims who would certainly resent such an arrangement. Hence the Bengal government was in favour of nomination, if additional representation was at all to be provided for. But such additional representation was considered to be both unnecessary, because these classes were not socially oppressed in Bengal, and politically inexpedient, because a few more additional nominated representatives would upset the balance between rural and urban representation and would involve communal difficulties. In these circumstances, "the real requirement", the government thought, "is increased representation

not of the depressed classes ... but of the poorer class of the population ... The solution of the problem lies in lowering the franchise so as to give these classes more weight in the general constituencies."[55]

Another important question which was also being raised around this time was representation of the depressed classes in government services. In February 1907, the Government of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in a Resolution on the employment of Muslims had also referred to the necessity of recruiting members of important Hindu castes other than those usually employed in government offices. But no definite policy in this direction was formulated at that time.[56] And in 1913, the Government of India declared in the Imperial Legislative Council that "any reservation of such work for them to the exclusion of others is scarcely practicable"[57]

But gradually the government began to shift from this position and an enquiry in 1919 revealed that many departments under the Government of Bengal were already giving "special facilities" to the members of the depressed classes in matters of appointment, although there was not yet any such reservation policy formally declared by the government.[58] In september 1920, the Government of India by way of giving effect to the proposal of the Public Services Commission instructed the Bengal government to introduce competition, if found feasible, for the recruitment to the Provincial Civil Services. However, in doing so, "due regard ... [was] to be paid to the need for representing in the services different classes and sections of the community".[59] The Bengal government had already accepted competition as feasible, but this competition was to be restricted among candidates nominated by college authorities. So far as communal representation was concerned, it was decided to earmark one-third of the appointments for the Muslims. But for the depressed classes, such reservation was not considered to be "safe", owing to the derth of qualified candidates. They would be ensured an opportunity to compete and then be left to their own efforts and ability to secure an appointment.[60]

But the government moved from this position subsequently. The first Notification that came out in 1922, instructed the heads of

colleges and the Director of Public Instruction to nominate candidates for the examination, with due regard being paid to the desirability of representing different classes and communities. The Selection Committee, which included a representative of the depressed classes, was asked to select candidates for examination from among these nominations. In doing this, they were not to be guided by "such considerations as the politics of the candidates' relations, family status and caste". But the selection had to be "so made that not less than one-third of the candidates shall be Muhammadans, and not less than one-sixth shall be either Anglo-Indians or members of the depressed classes".[61] As regards appointments, nothing was explicitly said now, but it was informally accepted that the same proportions would be followed in making the appointments as well.[62]

The results of the first examination, however, revealed the difficulties of accommodating communal representation within the competitive system. The existing rules were criticised for not providing adequate safeguards for the representation of the depressed classes. Grouped as they were with the Anglo-Indians, the depressed classes could not compete with them on equal terms, as Bhishmadeb Das, their representative in the first Selection Committee, pointed out. Moreover, the members of the Selection Committee disagreed as to the classes which should come under this category. And even if this elusive problem was settled, as in this case the Calcutta University Commission list was later accepted, this raised new problems. It was impossible to reserve appointments for them according to a strict numerical ratio, as higher education was still very limited among them. Nevertheless, some "special facilities" had to be given to them as well, if a reservation policy was to be continued for the Muslims. And the government was also committed to this principle, as they had recently accepted a Council resolution which proposed to secure a proportion of the appointments to the depressed classes. The problem, therefore, was how to achieve it in a proper way.

There were several alternative solutions, but each involved a number of political and administrative difficulties. To accept the right of every caste and community to a proportion of public

appointments on the basis of their numerical strength, as was done in relation to the Muslims, would lead to "a perfectly impossible position". And that idea was also considered to be "separatist in tendency and opposed to the spirit of competition", although it had to be followed in the case of the Muslims for "historical and other goods reasons". The other alternative was to scrap the reservation system altogether. But in "the present state of education", that "would lead to all the appointments being absorbed by one class of the community which would not be to the interest of the State". At the same time, to reserve certain proportions of appointments for the depressed classes as a whole, would have the undesirable effect of stimulating "competition for eligibility to this title", and given the "individual differences in advancement", one group might go ahead of the others and "get all the appointments reserved for the rest". Hence the only way out of this impasse was "for Government to nominate".[63] The Notification of 1923, therefore, explicitly stated that "Government reserve the right to nominate any qualified candidate" belonging to "the backward classes as enumerated ..... [in] the University Commission's Report".[64] And in doing so, even "the question of a minimum qualifying standard for appointment" could as well be ignored.[65]

When all these constitutional and executive measures were being taken, education of the depressed classes was not being neglected. Following a resolution in the Council, proposed by Syed Emdadul Haq in March 1922, the Bengal government had provided for a budgetary allocation of Rs 20,000 for the improvement of education among the backward classes. Out of it, 103 new scholarships, ranging from upper primary to graduate levels, were instituted for students of these classes A Namasudra hostel was started at Faridpur and additional grants were sanctioned to the Baptist Zenana Mission and the Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes.[66] The latter society, from 1923 onwards, received an annual grant of Rs. 6,250 from the government and since 1922 all the government funds allocated for the schools of the depressed classes were disbursed through them.[67] The number of schools under their control and the number of pupils instructed there had also increased phenomenally between 1918-19 and 1924-25. As there was a fall in private subscriptions, the D P.I. recommended

in March 1927 a grant of Rs. 3000 per annum for a period of five years, on condition that the amount of private subscriptions raised by the Society should not be less than half of the total government grant.[68] Meanwhile, grants to the depressed classes' hostels in Calcutta were also continued and the Government promised to consider sympathetically further proposals for similar hostels, although financial assistance would depend upon the availability of funds.[69] And finally around August 1927, following a Council resolution, the Government began to think of launching a massive primary education programme for students of the depressed classes, involving a budgetary allocation of Rs. 3 lakhs.[70]

IV

The question of the depressed classes acquired additional importance in the middle of 1928, when the Government of India, under the suggestion of M.S. Ingram of the Church Missionary Society in the United Provinces, proposed the appointment of a Special Officer in Bengal to look after the interests of the depressed classes. The proposal had originally come in 1926, but at that time the Bengal government did not consider it necessary at all.[71] But now after two years, when the question was raised again, many in the government thought that such a step was urgently called for, in order to ameliorate the condition of the depressed classes. There was already a Special Muhammadan Officer to look after the interests of the Muslim community in the province. So far as the depressed classes were concerned, the condition in Bengal, it was acknowledged, was "altogether different from that of Madras". Yet, the enquiries undertaken on the occasion of the visit of the Simon Commission revealed that more than half of the Hindu population in Bengal belonged to the depressed classes. Furthermore, leaders of such classes were constantly agitating against the government, alleging lack of sympathy for their grievances. And therefore, there was the constant hazard that they might "believe in whatever is mentioned to them by the Congress People". Under the circumstance, the Governor-in Council decided in September 1928, that an "officer will be placed on special duty to investigate the desirability of appointing a special officer to look after the interests

of the depressed classes in Bengal". W.S. Hopkyns was given this assignment and he was supposed to begin his enquiry after the departure of the Simon Commission.[72]

Hopkyns conducted a detailed and elaborate enquiry which was completed in May 1929. The depressed classes "were defined as including the 'untouchables', meaning those who defiled others by their presence or their touch, and also those who, owing to their ignorance and backwardness, are liable to be exploited or otherwise ill-treated by other classes among whom they live". Accepting the 1921 census figures, their number was enumerated at something over 11,200,000. His report, however, concluded that generally speaking, the backwardness of the depressed classes was now " more due to poverty and ignorance than to the disabilities of caste" ; and hence, a special officer was not required. Their primary need was education and funds to provide it. The Rural Primary Education Bill, then being considered, would be of great value to these backward classes, if passed into law. But failing that, certain remedies, as advised by the Director of Public Instruction, might be applied and these included extension of free-studentships, creation of additional reserved scholarships and special allotments for giving adequate grants to schools attended by the pupils of the depressed classes. Finally, grants to Missions and Societies, such as the Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes, which were already doing good work, had to be enhanced.[73]

The Government, acting upon the recommendations of Hopkyns, resolved in November 1929 that the appointment of a Special Officer to look after the general interests of the depressed classes in Bengal "is not necessary". But at the same time they accepted "the principle of doing everything possible for the improvement of the depressed classes" and the different departments were asked to submit definite schemes to this effect.[74] A detailed programme, however, had already been prepared by Sir P. C. Mitter, a member of the Executive Council, then in charge of education. These depressed classes, he argued, were "a special charge" of the Governor, as the existing royal instructions required him to make "due provision for the advancement and social welfare of these classes ... [who] specially rely upon our protection and cannot as

yet fully rely for their welfare upon joint political action ... ". His recommendations included first of all the Primary Education Bill, and apart from that, additional scholarships, preferably at the lower level of education and in the technical and medical institutions, but not at the higher stages of conventional education, for that would only increase the number of unemployed disgruntled *bhadralok*. Secondly, provision had to be made for at least Rs. 50,000 annually for encouragement of the existing and the new societies which would run schools for the depressed classes. In addition to this, at least 10 per cent of the ministerial appointments in certain districts where these classes were mainly concentrated, had to be reserved for them, along with some special facilities for deserving youngmen of these classes to enter higher services. For the improvement of the material condition of these classes, he suggested special organisation of their caste occupations through co-operatives and the employment of an officer of the co-operative department for this purpose. And finally, to implement all these programmes, he recommended the allocation of at least Rs. 1,25,000 by the government.[75]

Many of the recommendations made by Hopkyns and Mitter were later implemented by the government. The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill was passed by the Provincial Legislative Council in August 1930. Around the same time, the Director of Public Instruction started an investigation to formulate a definite scheme for the extension of free-studentship, additional scholarships and special allotment for schools attended by the pupils of the depressed classes, while the government had already been spending a sum of over one lakh of rupees for such purposes. And in spite of financial stringency, additional grants were asked for the societies working among these people.[76]

So far as higher provincial services were concerned, nomination from among such candidates had already been provided for and a widening of its coverage by including new castes into the list was also being considerd.[77] Most of the district officers in 1930 preferred an extension of such special facilities to the Mahishyas and the Rajbansis, who were not included in the Calcutta University Commission list, but who were not as yet in a position to compete on

equal terms with the high caste Hindu and the Muslim candidates. It was decided, therefore, to amalgamate the census list of 1921 and that of the Calcutta University Commission to have a fairly exhaustive list of castes who should legitimately belong to this category. In the new list that was issued, the Namasudras, Mahishyas and Rajbansis were bracketed as "Minority Communities" along with Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and Buddhists, and other groups were included as "Backward classes". The list was not final, as other groups at any time could apply for inclusion. A separate competitive examination was proposed for them; but even then, if adequate number of candidates failed to qualify, the government could nominate to not more than 10 per cent of the existing vacancies. The government also reserved the right to nominate candidates from these classes to the upper Medical Service, but in this case no percentage was fixed.[78]

In August 1930, the Governor in Council proposed to extend such facilities to ministerial appointments as well, this was found necessary for "the encouragement of education among the backward classes". For this purpose, the list finalised for the Provincial Services was adopted, with the omission of Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians whose educational standards were considered to be higher than those of the other communities in the list.[79] So far as reservation of a certain percentage of appointments was concerned, most of the district officers opposed it on the ground that sufficient number of suitable candidates were not yet forthcoming from these classes. However, in Faridpur and Bakarganj, which had a large concentration of depressed classes, it was found that the high caste *bhadralok*, who constituted only 13·5 per cent of the population in the former district and 14·5 per cent in the latter, had the possibility of getting 66 6 per cent of the appointments open to the non-Muslims. Hence an experiment in reservation could be had in these two districts.[80] The Memorandum that was issued in April 1931 to this effect, did not prescribe any percentage for all the areas and districts. Only for Faridpur and Bakarganj was it stipulated that "at least 1 out of every 3 non-Muhammadans appointed to ministerial vacancies must belong to the backward classes". In other areas, appointing authorities in the districts were instructed to encourage candidates from these classes. Such candidates "who

possess the qualifications required for any such appointment", it was specifically mentioned, "should not be rejected merely because other candidates have reached a higher standard". But such preference would be applicable "only to admission to probation, not to confirmation after probation".[81] Even in spite of this circular, not many candidates from the backward classes were appointed in ministerial jobs during the next two years. This was either due to lack of suitable candidates or because no post was available after meeting the prior claims of other communities, notably Muslims. And this did "not necessarily imply", as the government representative emphasized in the Legislative Council, "that no attempt has been made to follow out the instructions ...."[82]

Meanwhile, by October 1930, the Director of Public Instruction had finalized a scheme for additional free studentships for students belonging to the backward Hindu classes. At this time, he pointed out, the number of free-students from non-Muslim including the backward sections and Muslim communities in Government schools were ordinarily 5 per cent of their respective enrolments. This naturally adversely affected the members of the backward classes belonging to the Hindu community. "It would, therefore, seem desirable", he emphasized, "that these backward classes should also be allowed concessions equal to, if not greater than, what are admissible in the case of Moslem pupils". His suggestion was that the students from these sections of the community "should be allowed special concessions in the shape of free studentships upto an annual limit of 15 per cent of their own enrolment".[83] When the finance department raised the question of the loss of revenue, he argued that it "is not desirable to regard the question only from the point of view of probable loss to Government ; there is such a thing as political exigency also."[84] The proposal was ultimately sanctioned in April 1932, and it was to be applicable in Government as well as in Government aided schools.[85]

As the discussion of constitutional reforms started during this time, the question of the depressed classes acquired much more importance. But before we go into that, it will be pertinent here to mention the views of the Bengal government on a few significant bills introduced in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, as these would

reveal the attitude of the government to the whole issue of the status of the depressed classes. These would further show that through all these measures, the government was merely trying to win over the depressed classes and not certainly aiming at a fundamental social revolution. Such proposals there were and they could ultimately have benefited those classes in a much more concrete way.

In December 1932, Raja and Ranga Iyer, two members of the Central Legislative Assembly, tried to introduce the Untouchability Abolition Bill which would outlaw all forms of penalty, disadvantage or disability suffered by members of the untouchable castes. Almost simultaneously, permission was sought for introducing in the Madras Legislative Council two other similar bills, the Removal of Depressed Classes' Religious Disabilities Bill and the Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill. Introduction of all these bills required the prior sanction of the Governor-General and for this the Bengal government was asked to communicate its views.[86] The matter was hereafter "carefully considered" by the latter. Although the two Hindu members, Sir P. C. Mitter and B. P. Singh Roy, thought that the passage of such bills would be deeply resented by a large section of the Hindu community, "on a strict application of the Principles hitherto applied", it was found "difficult to [justify] refusal of sanction. ..." However, so far as the Assembly Bill was concerned, it was found, that "considerations of expediency seem to point clearly to refusal of sanction, provided such refusal can be supported by adequate reasons". As it involved "a very extensive invasion of private rights within the Hindu community", the possible argument against sanction would be that "it could not with propriety be submitted for the decision of a legislature unless unmistakable evidence had been furnished of a general desire on the part of the Hindu community for such a change ..." It was doubtful whether such an argument would be "sufficiently impressive", but nevertheless, this could be used "for delaying the progress of the bill ..." The other alternative was for the government to introduce a carefully drafted bill, which would ensure to the depressed classes "a position of complete equality before the law with members of the higher castes, while leaving all private rights untouched". And in that case the initiative would remain in the hands of the government which then "might successfully claim that it went as far as legislative interference could

properly go". The possibilities of this course, therefore, needed to be "carefully explored".[87]

Even in spite of a threat from Gandhi to resort to fast, sanction to the Madras bills was refused by the Governor-General on the ground that pilgrims to Madras temples came from all over India and therefore, it was not a provincial issue to be decided in the provincial legislature. The Assembly bill was allowed to be introduced, although the Government insisted that "the consideration of any such measure could not proceed unless the proposals are subjected to the fullest examination in all their aspects not merely in the legislature, but also outside it by all who will be affected by them."[88] The Untouchability Abolition Bill was discussed in the Legislative Assembly in September 1933 and January 1934, and finally on February 1, the motion for circulation of the Bill was adopted. But in course of the debate, it was pointed out by the Law Member, that if the depressed classes were removed from the category of outcastes, they must be given a definite status in Hindu society. Consequently, notice was received of two bills, the Hindus' Status Bill and the Depressed Classes Status Bill, both of which required previous sanction of the Governor-General for introduction. The first bill proposed to give the untouchables the status of Brahmans and thus made a fundamental attack on the Hindu religious and social system. The Government of India decided to refuse sanction to this bill, because the introduction of such "a drastic revolutionary measure" in the legislature was considered to be "contrary to public policy". The other one, the Depressed Classes Status Bill, proposed by C. S. Ranga Iyer, provided that the depressed classes should henceforth be regarded as Sudras and be governed by laws applicable to Sudras. It was not considered to be as objectionable, but the local governments were asked to assess the possible effect that its introduction or public discussion might produce on the Hindu community.[89]

Charu Chandra Ghosh and Bejoy Prasad Singh Roy, two Hindu members of the Executive Council, thought that "any endeavour to include or exclude persons from the society through legislative enactment would be an infringement on the civil rights of the members of the community". The government should not go for it only "to placate political social reformers", for that would be "highly

inexpedient on political grounds".[90] G. P. Hogg, Chief Secretary, however, visualised the possible impact of this bill in an entirely different way and from a different perspective altogether. "I do not think", he noted, that "anything is to be gained by stiffling discussion of the proposal ... Indeed, it might be preferable politically if the subject were freely discussed ..." For such a discussion would bring to the surface the cleavages within Hindu society and would thus tear it apart. Firstly, the depressed classes and the untouchables would object to their permanent classification as Sudras, for that would check the process of "social climbing". The orthodox section, on the other hand, was likely to be divided on the subject. Some would probably approve of a scheme which would stereotype the Hindu system and put an end to social climbing. Others might resent the inclusion in Hindu society of untouchables or outcastes with whom they preferred to avoid contact. In this way a public discussion would surely split Hindu society into warring groups. But after this the proposal "should be opposed...unless the depressed classes and untouchables themselves unmistakably welcome the proposal and signify that they are prepared to accept it."[91]

However, in the end, the Bengal Government preferred to be more cautious and decided that "consent should not be given to the introduction of the Bill". For it sought to bring about a fundamental change in the constitution of Hindu society. Permitting the introduction and discussion of the present bill would create a widespread impression that government favoured such a change and it would be impossible to remove it from the minds of the masses who did not understand the niceties of legislative procedure. Furthermore, leaders of the depressed classes themselves were likely to object to such a measure which might obstruct the process of corporate social mobility.[92] Later, Ranga Iyer withdrew his bill in the face of strong opposition and many orthodox Hindus in Calcutta breathed a sigh of relief.[93]

V

The Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission had, in the meantime, once again brought to the fore the question of separate representation for the depressed classes. The Commission agreed that in Bengal, Bihar-Orissa and the United Provinces the untouchables did

"not suffer so severely as in the south". But it would be "a mistake to suppose", they thought, "that the problem does not exist in these provinces". There had been considerable efforts to ameliorate their condition. But the progress had been and was likely to remain slow.[94] Hence they deserved some special protection in order to secure their legitimate political rights. But the Commission decided against a separate electorate, for this would mean a precise definition of all who were covered by the term, thus stigmatizing each voter in the list and obstructing the rise of such 'depressed' people to a higher status in society. As a solution, the Commission proposed that there should be some reservation of seats. The proportion of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian General constituencies should be three-quarters of the proportion of the depressed class population to the total population of the electoral area in the province. And the Governor in consultation with the associations of such people would certify which candidates should be authorised to stand for the depressed class seats.[95] In August 1930, the Government of Bengal accepted in principle the recommendations of the Commission, but did not agree to the proportions suggested by them. Because any decision regarding proportions, it thought, would require a careful examination of the number of people of the depressed classes in areas where they were largely concentrated and an adjustment of their representation to the total representation of these areas.

However, the deliberations at the Round Table Conference had made it further evident that it was generally felt that some provision should be made in the new Constitution for better representation of the depressed classes, and that the method of representation by nomination was no longer regarded as appropriate. The Minorities Sub-Committee report of the first Round Table Conference showed that the representative of the Depressed Classes had demanded that they should be separated from the Hindu population and be regarded as a distinct community for electoral purposes. But the Government of India was not yet sure about its feasibility. Hence in their Despatch on Constitutional Reforms, the matter was referred to the Indian Franchise Committee to be headed by Lord Lothian, which would secure to the depressed classes adequate representation by the best practicable means.[96]

In responding to the enquiries by the Indian Franchise Committee, the Bengal government found difficulties in recommending such a practical means. First of all, they agreed that a general extension of franchise might not secure to the depressed classes representatives of their own choice. It was true that there were 8 (elected) standing members of the Legislative Council (out of 46 Hindu members) belonging to these groups. But most of them came from two articulate castes; the Namasudras and the Rajbansis (if the Mahishyas were included the number would have been even more). Hence even if a general extension of franchise would bring in more representatives from these classes, they would belong to these articulate groups and the others would be left behind. Hence, the Depressed Classes, the government realised, "cannot be left without more adequate safeguard in the scramble for power". But it was not prepared to accept the "group system of representation" as contemplated by the Franchise Committee, for it appeared to be "fanciful, complicated and impracticable". Nor was it in favour of creating another separate electorate as desired by the representative of the depressed classes in the Round Table Conference. The principle of reservation of seats had been accepted,[97] but this involved a number of difficulties.

First of all, so far as the depressed classes were concerned, there was no precedent for reservation in the province. Hence the number of such reserved seats according to population ratio had to be determined. And for that, it should be clearly decided what castes should be included within this category. The 1931 census had classified 82 castes as either depressed or backward with a total population of 7,756,301. The list included untouchables, groups of aboriginal derivation and castes of low status in Hindu society. The Revenue department added six other castes to the list with a population of 304,643. The Rajbansis were included, as advised by Hopkyns in 1929, but the Mahishyas were excluded, for they were considered to be "able to look after themselves".[98] The list was forwarded to the Franchise Committeee in March 1932. But it was described as a provisional list, as the Government were "not yet ready with their decision as to the communities which should be included in the list of depressed classes".[99]

Now the main problem was to determine the number of seats to be reserved for these classes. Some in the government thought that

the "rough and ready formula" suggested by the Simon Commision was the most practicable. But others preferred to wait for the recommendations of the Provincial Franchise Committee appointed in January 1932.[100] In its report submmitted in March, the Committee made only one important recommendation, i.e., lowering of franchise or giving direct voting right to all paying at least 12 annas as local tax or rate. But Mukunda Behari Mullick, the depressed classes' representative in the Committee, in his Minute of dissent claimed for the depressed classes at least 35 seats out of a total of 200 in Bengal.[101] So far as franchise was concerned, the Indian Franchise Committee recommended "differential franchise" if necessary, to bring the depressed classes electorate upto their population ratio or in any event as near as possible to 10 per cent of their population strength. The Bengal government accepted the 10 per cent ratio, but hoped that no differential franchise would be necessary to reach it. And the provisional electoral rolls prepared in July 1933 proved this contention.[102]

The Communal Decision announced in August 1932 put an end to all contemplations and calculations. Under its provisions, members of the depressed classes, eligible for voting, were to vote as usual in the general constituencies. But in view of "the fact that for considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the legislative, a number of special seats will be assigned to them ... These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the 'depressed classes' electorally qualified will be entitled to vote". Such voters would, therefore, vote both in a general and special constituency. This proposed arrangement of special constituencies would be terminated after twenty years. But in the meantime they might be abolished with the consent of the classes concerned. The scope of the Decision was, however, confined to the provincial legislatures only. In Bengal, it was acknowledged, a majority of voters in some general constituencies would belong to the depressed classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number was fixed for the members to be returned from the special depressed class constituencies in this province. But it was "intended ... that the Depressed classes should obtain not less than ten seats in the Bengal Legislature".[103]

The Communal Decision raised a storm in Indian politics as Gandhi, then in confinement in the Yeravda gaol, decided to fast unto death, unless the separate electorate for the depressed classes was revoked. This arrangement, he thought, would signify a permanent split in Hindu society, would perpetuate the stigma of untouchability and would stand in the way of eventual assimilation of the untouchables into the Hindu community.[104] The crisis came to an end with the Poona Agreement, signed in the presence of Gandhi (September 1932) between the representatives of the depressed classes and the caste Hindus. The agreement accepted the principle of reservation of seats for the depressed classes out of the general electorate seats in the provincial legislatures — in Bengal the number of such reserved seats would be 30, instead of 10 awarded in the Communal Decision. But election to these seats should be by joint electorates subject, however, to a particular procedure. All the members of the depressed classes registered in the general electoral roll of a constituency would form an electoral college. It would elect a panel of four candidates belonging to depressed classes for each of such reserved seats by the method of single vote, and four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election were to be the candidates for election by the general electorate. In the central legislature, 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate would be reserved for depressed classes and the same procedure of election would be followed. The arrangement would continue for ten years, unless terminated before by mutual agreement. Apart from representation in the legislature, the Poona Pact also envisaged that every endeavour should be made to secure a fair representation of the depressed classes in the public services and that in every province an adequate sum should be earmarked for providing educational facilities for the members of these classes.[105]

The agreement appeared to be "reasonable" to His Mejesty's Gevernment. Moreover, the condition of Gandhi was then critical.[106] Under the circumstances, the Government of India accepted the Poona Pact without any delay, stating that its full implementation would need further consideration, since many of its provisions lay outside the scope of the Communal Decision mainly dealing with the question of representation in the provincial

legislatures.[107] The Bengal Government had no other option but to accept it ; but they did it with reservations. First of all, there was no time to assess the opinion of the classes affected by the agreement. There was no public protest for the time being because of the necessity to save Gandhi's life. However, disaffection was likely to grow as caste Hindus had lost 20 more seats. Moreover, none form Bengal was among the signatories of the Pact, except perhaps Birla ; but he did not have a general standing in the province. And above all, the Depressed Classes Association of Bengal had already registered its protest against the insufficient number of seats reserved for their members.[108]

The Poona Agreement was regarded as a settled fact, and the Government of India Act of 1935 merely embodied its main provisions. It granted six reserved seats in the Central Legislature and thirty in the Bengal Legislative Assembly for the depressed classes who were henceforth to be known as "Scheduled Castes". The term "depressed" had been in use to indicate social and educational backwardness. But its use as a constitutional epithet would increase the confusion. Moreover, it was not the intention of the government to label any particular caste or tribe with the stigma of untouchability or depressed character. Hence the value-free term "scheduled" was adopted, as the castes concerned would be entered into a schedule for electoral purposes.[109]

VI

The first and foremost problem in connection with the implementation of this constitutional programme was to define the Scheduled Castes and to fix up their final list. The Simon Commission had recommended that the Franchise Committee would undertake for each province the framing of a definition of depressed classes and the determination of their numbers. The Committee decided that the term should be applied only to those who were untouchables.[110] The Communal Decision had also envisaged that the definition in each province would be based as a rule on the general principle advocated by the Franchise Committee. But modifications were allowed, where the application of the general criterion of

untouchability was likely to result in a definition unsuitable to the special conditions of the province.

The Bengal government decided that the criterion of untouchability would be unsuitable to the general conditions of Bengal, and adopted instead a more general criterion of "social and political backwardness". A provisional list of such castes was prepared and a Resolution in January 1933 declared that: "The list has been prepared on the basis of the social and political backwardness of these castes and the necessity of securing for them special representation in order to protect their interests". However, before making the list final, the Bengal government decided to publish it for discussion and invited opinions from associations and individuals for inclusion or non-inclusion of any caste or castes in the list.[111] Along with this, the district officers were asked to examine the "social, political, economic and educational position of the castes" in their areas, "to determine whether the castes are below the general level of development and so deserve special representation to protect their interests". And they were "asked particularly to note that social precedence in itself was not a determining factor".[112] By September, the government received a number of representations from public bodies, caste associations and individuals. The recommendations of the Divisional Commissioners and District Officers had also been carefully considered. On the basis of that a final list was prepared and forwarded to the Government of India. It included 76 castes, while the previous provisional list had 36.[113]

When the Government of India Bill was announced the First Schedule to the Bill defined the Scheduled Castes as, "Such castes, races and tribes corresponding to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed classes' as His Majesty in Council may specify". The Government of Bengal had some objections to this definition. First of all, the term 'depressed classes' was never precisely defined; it was used in a loose manner covering a miscellaneous group of castes, races and tribes. The Poona Pact on the other hand, had stipulated that the 'Scheduled Castes' must belong to the Hindu community. But if the definition proposed were to stand, it would be possible to read it as implying that all races or

tribes, whether they belonged to the Hindu community or not, should be included within the term 'Scheduled Caste'. In that case, 'Scheduled Caste' population would be raised by over half a million. Moreover, Christian members of such castes would have to be included. Such an "extension of the Poona Pact to non-Hindus, would represent a political change of the first importance".[114] Caste Hindu opinion would strongly resent the inflation of the Scheduled Caste numbers by the inclusion of the 528,000 members of the "primitive tribes" who did not belong to the Hindu community. The Scheduled Caste leaders would take equally strong objection to it. And Indian Christian opinion would be grievously shocked by the suggestion that Christian members of the "primitive tribes" should be grouped for electoral purposes with the Scheduled Castes. Finally, this would also affect delimitation of constituencies.[115]

The Secretary of State accepted the objections of the Bengal Government and decided to revise the existing definition in the First Schedule to the Bill.[116] Indian Christians all over India were to be excluded from the definition of the Scheduled Castes ; and in Bengal alone, persons professing tribal religions and Buddhism were also to be excluded from this definition.[117] All these revisions were incorporated in the Scheduled Caste Order of 1936, which also contained the final list of the Scheduled Castes for the purposes of the First, Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Government of India Act of 1935. The list included 76 castes and was mostly similar to the one forwarded to the Government of India in September 1933, the major difference being the exclusion of the Sutradhars who protested against their inclusion and the inclusion of the Sunris who had put up a vigorous agitation for inclusion.[118]

As on the previous occasions, the list was full of anomalies. It included a number of tribes which did not as such belong to the Hindu community. On the other hand, it excluded many castes which did not want to be included, such as the Telis, Kalus, Jogis and Sutradhars. But it incorporated many others against their wishes, as in the opinion of the government they fulfilled the conditions of social and economic backwardness. However many of them lived in a similar socio-economic condition as those excluded from the

list. Therefore, sometimes the principle of free choice and sometimes the judgement of the government decided the status of a caste. And this judgement was entirely subjective, as there was no definite standard to measure the social backwardness of a caste.[119]

The list thus prepared was nevertheless final, so far as electoral arrangements under the new constitution were concerned. And it was to be followed in matters of recruitment to the public services as well — both provincial higher services and ministerial jobs.[120] In this sphere, no further step was immediately deemed necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Poona Pact, although in 1936, fifteen per cent of the ministerial vacancies in nine districts of Bengal were reserved for the minorities and the backward classes.[121]

The other problem connected with the implementation of the constitutional reforms was related to delimitation of Scheduled Caste constituencies. Past electoral records showed that in many districts where more than half of the population belonged to these castes, only caste Hindu candidates were elected in all the previous elections. Even the representatives of some depressed classes in the legislature did not truly represent their interests. Some of them were substantial landlords, like Prasanna Deb Raikat of Jalpaiguri, Ranjit Pal Choudhuri of Ranaghat or Srish Chandra Nandi, the Maharaja of Kasimbazar. Some represented the Congress, like Hem Chandra Naskar, Mohini Mohan Das or Hosseni Raut. So the "real point" was not returning a few Scheduled Caste candidates, "but returning members who represent the Scheduled Castes". And with this purpose in view, special constituencies had to be devised.[122] These reserved seats, as decided by the Provincial Advisory Committee, had to be confined to rural areas alone, where they were mostly concentrated and were to be distributed on the basis of their population by divisions and districts.[123] A preliminary calculation showed that roughly 49 percent of the Scheduled Caste population lived in western Bengal, 28 per cent in northern Bengal and 23 per cent in eastern Bengal. The distribution of seats then ought to be about 15 for western Bengal, 8 for northern Bengal and 7 for eastern Bengal. No district with less than one per cent of the Scheduled Caste population of the province would get any reserved seat. Later, the rule was revised to allot one seat each to

five such districts, i.e. Howrah (0·69), Nadia (0·63), Murshidabad (0·69), Malda (0·69) and Tippera (0·75); Bogra (0·27) and Pabna (0·42) were combined to get one seat; but Rajshahi (0·48), Noakhali (0·27) and Chittagong (0·18) received no seat at all.[124]

Another knotty problem that intrigued the Bengal government, was whether the members of the Scheduled Castes should be freely allowed to contest the unreserved seats as well. It was found that in two divisions, Presidency and Rajshahi, and in eight districts (Jalpaiguri was for this purpose combined with Siliguri) the Scheduled Castes were in a majority; in some other districts the numbers of the Scheduled Castes and the rest of the Hindu community were nearly equal. Hence, if they were allowed to contest unreserved seats without restriction they could capture several seats over and above the reserved quota of 30. The number of such additional seats, given the present numerical ratio, might be as large as 8, with the consequence of 38 out of 66 General rural seats in Bengal going to the members of the Scheduled Castes. This "may not only defeat the objects of the [Poona] Pact itself, but may result in a travesty of the whole principle of representation." As the Pact stood, it could only be dissolved with the mutual consent of the parties. But if the Scheduled Castes of Bengal were placed in such a privileged position of having 30 reserved seats and the chance of several more in open competition, then their consent was not likely to be secured easily. Thus the Pact might result in a permanent advantage to the Scheduled Castes at the expense of the caste Hindus. Certainly this was not intended by the Pact, otherwise the caste Hindu representatives would not have agreed to it. The only remedy to this anomalous situation was to make it a condition that in any multiple-member constituency, with one or more reserved seats, no Scheduled Caste candidate would be eligible for election, unless he had passed through the panel procedure as envisaged in the Poona Pact. "The protection, in the peculiar situation in Bengal", the local government argued, "..... need not go further; if it does so, the reservation passes from protection to domination."[125]

The Indian Association and some of the Hindu Members of the Legislative Council also supported the contention of the Bengal government by demanding that the members of the Scheduled Castes

should be prevented from contesting any unreserved seat, except in constituencies where there was no reserved seat at all.[126] The Secretary of the All Bengal Depressed Classes Federation, however, thought that such prevention would "virtually amount to denial of the rights of the Scheduled Castes as members of the general Hindu community".[127] And naturally, this would be a negation of the central idea of the Poona Pact. Ultimately, the members of the Scheduled Castes were allowed to contest for the unreserved seats as well, along with the 30 reserved seats. The polling for the Primary (Panel) election for the reserved seats took place on 21 November 1936, and that for the general elections between 18 and 22 January 1937.[128] The results showed that in addition to 30 reserved seats, the Seheduled Castes had also captured two more non-reserved seats.[129] And the coalition ministry that was formed subsequently by A. K. Fazlul Huq included two Scheduled Caste ministers, Mukunda Behari Mullick (Namasudra) and Prasanna Deb Raikat (Rajbansi).[130]

The "Government is ready, has always been and will always be ready, to help [the] Scheduled Castes ... ", declared Huq in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on March 14, 1939.[131] In fact, from 1937 onwards, the government had been offering all conceivable facilities to the members of the Scheduled Castes, particularly in the sphere of education. A state scholarship for study abroad and 19 special scholarships for medical education for the Scheduled Caste students were created. A recurring provision of about Rs. 30,000 was sanctioned for other scholarships and stipends for the students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, along with an additional lump provision of Rs. 5 lakhs for affording them further educational facilities. A Special Officer belonging to the Scheduled Caste community was appointed to look after their educational needs. And a Scheduled Caste Education Committee was appointed in 1939, with Dr. W. A. Jenkins as the Chairman, the Special Officer as the Secretary and 13 Scheduled Caste M.L.A.s as members. The Committee was supposed to "investigate the problem of improving the education of the scheduled castes in the province and to make their recommendations in the matter ...."[132]

In the public services, however, the Scheduled Castes did not make much headway. Only two of their members in 1937-38 and

three in 1938-39 could get through the Special Clerkship Examination, the corresponding figures for the Bengal Civil Service Examination being only two for both the years. Among 32 appointments made by the Public Service Commission through selection in 1937-38 only one Scheduled Caste candidate was appointed in the Bengal Medical Service (Upper) and among 36 such appointments made in 1938-39 one such candidate was selected as Inspector of Factories. In the latter case, of course, the Scheduled Caste candidate was appointed by the government by overruling the prior claim of a caste Hindu nominee recommended by the Commission. And then, in the sphere of representative bodies, the new Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act of 1939 provided for 3 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes to be filled in by nomination.[133]

VII

'Protective discrimination'[134] in favour of the 'depressed classes', later called the 'Scheduled Castes', was thus a persistent feature of British policy in Bengal. It had started developing since the beginning of the twentieth century and by 1937 it had become firmly established. The Bengal government was a bit uncertain about its possible coverage, partly because of the necessity of patronising the Muslims who were politically more important in this province than the depressed classes, and partly because the problem of untouchability and social discrimination or disability was relatively less severe in Bengal than in other parts of India. The central government, on the other hand, wanted to introduce a uniform policy throughout India and the reluctant Bengal government was, therefore, forced into it. Of course, the latter were never wholly averse to it. The colonial ethnographers and the census reports had already pointed out the existence of a depressed community in Bengal which deserved special protection of the government. And the political exigencies were also dictating such a policy, which would run parallel to the policy of rallying the Muslims. The difference in the attitudes of the two governments seems to be merely confined to the perception of the nature and extent of such a protective policy and had not much to do with its rationale or desirability.

The most important question in this connection was to determine the probable beneficiaries of such a protective policy. The Bengal government sought to solve this elusive problem by preparing lists of such castes on no less than eight occasions between 1917 and 1936, each list being taken to be an improvement over the previous one and each list being found faulty on the next occasion. As a result, they included different sets of social groups, although some names were common in all. This anomalous situation was partly due to a continuous process of social mobility[185] and partly due to the absence of any objective criterion to determine the social rank of the different groups. And it was, perhaps, not even possible to fix up any such objective criterion. Hence the subjective judgement of the government alone decided whether the economic, social or educational status of a particular caste was so backward that the group deserved the special protection of the government. Thus the colonial government became a more direct arbiter of social and economic life in the country and the system of patronage-distribution became dependent on caste-indentity or a subjective assessment of the socio-economic conditions of not the individuals but the castes to which they belonged. Caste-consciousness, as a result, was articulated in the field of secondary-group relations and the structural pluralism was reinforced.

This brings us to the question of the role of the state in a plural society and its possible impact. In a liberal pluralist society, the state sometimes intervenes to prevent discrimination, but it never makes any formal distinction between groups of people, defined in terms of racial or ethnic origin, either for providing benefits or inflicting penalties. In such a society, the individual gets his economic or political rewards on the basis of his personal merits and not of his group affiliation. In such a system the policy of the government is strictly *laissez-faire*. In corporate pluralism, on the other hand, racial or ethnic groups are recognised as valid social entities and the distribution pattern of political power and economic rewards is based on group-affiliation and group rights. In other words, group-membership plays a significant role in educational opportunities, occupational placement, income, political power and other similar matters. The very logic of this reward-system thus puts pressure on the members of the racial or ethnic communities to

stay within the group for marriage, close personal friendship, institutional life and social identity. Structural pluralism is thus emphasized and sustained.[136] In fact, it sometimes becomes necessary to adopt such a model of rewards in order to allow submerged groups, which in the past have been severely discriminated against, to catch up with the other groups within a reasonable span of time. But in a colonial set up, the model may have other justification too – notably the imperatives of a policy of *divide et impera*. And this may perhaps explain why in the early twentieth century the British government in India moved away from its early *laissez faire* (so far as its reward system was concerned) to a policy of protective discrimination or in other words, from a model of liberal pluralism to that of corporate pluralism.

What Eugene Irschik concluded for Madras may perhaps be legitimately generalised for India, and for that matter for Bengal as well. On the one hand, the colonial government, through all these executive and constitutional measures, were perhaps seriously trying to redress the existing social imbalance in Indian society. But on the other, by encouraging self-awareness and political aspirations of the lower castes, they tried to keep the nation divided and weak, at a time when anti-imperialist agitation was gathering momentum all over the country. It had now become necessary "to popularize the need for a continued British connection with India and in so doing maintain the stability of the British position."[137] "As regards the depressed classes", wrote the Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State in February 1934, "our objective is to raise them from degradation and merge them in the general level of the population."[138] And for that purpose it was decided to offer them "special protection" of the government so "that no room for doubt will be left on that point."[139] It indicated, in the words of the Viceroy himself, a change from an "attitude of neutrality" to a policy of "active assistance". But at the same time it seemed to be politically expedient to secure them "adequate and suitable representation" in the legislative bodies, so that they could exercise "real political influence", not only to make their needs known, but also "to ensure that those needs are not overlooked."[140] It seemed "preferable from every point of view to encourage them to make use of their powerful block of votes to extract for themselves the concessions

they desire."[141] Attempts to politicise caste were, therefore, motivated not by a philanthropic urge alone, but by the desire to encourage separatist political tendencies as well.

Indian society also responded in a way the colonial government expected it to. The constant attempt of the government at classification and quantification of castes for the purposes of patronage-distribution made Indians conscious of their caste identity. It had always been an important factor in India, so far as the primary or interpersonal relationships were concerned. But now it became important in the realm of secondary group relations as well, thus transforming a socio-cultural dichotomy into a conflict of interests. Caste in the process became a politically relevant category. Structural separation between castes, particularly between the lower castes at the one end and the higher castes on the other, was thus reinforced and given an additional lease of life — although such separation was now valid more in a secular rather than ritual context.

NOTES

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3. J. G. Cumming, Secy., GB, Gen., to Secy., GI, Education, No. 1760, 18 March 1911, General (Miscellaneous), GB, File No. 10-C/30-2, A March 1911, Progs. Nos. 29-31.
4. 'Annual Report on Indian Papers Published in the Bengal Presidency During the year 1910', (Calcutta, 1911), p. 36, Home (Political), GI, B July 1911, Prog. No. 120.
5. Surendra Nath Banerjee, Secy., Indian Association, to Secy., GI, Education, 3 March 1911, General (Miscellaneous), GB, File No. 10C/30-2, A March 1911, Progs. Nos. 29-31.

6. *cf.* Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1981), pp. 26-29.
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9. Richard P. Cronin, *British Policy in Bengal, 1905-1912 : Partition and the New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, (Calcutta, 1977) pp. 162-165.
10. General (Education), GB, File No. 11C-9-1, A April 1913, Prog. No. 67.
11. 'Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the years 1907-8 to 1911-12', General (Education), GB, File No. 8R-16, A May 1914, Progs. Nos. 1-3 ; 'Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1908-9', General (Education), GB, File No. 8R-26, A December 1909, Progs. Nos. 62-63.
12. General (Education), GB, File No. 11C-9-1, A April 1913, Prog. No. 67.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. General (Education), GB, File No. 11C-17, A April 1914, Progs. Nos. 59-60, Notes, p. 1.
16. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings* (hereafter *BLCP*), Vol. 46, 28 February 1914, p. 161.
17. General (Education), GB, File No. 11C-47, A September 1913, Progs. Nos. 14-15.
18. *Ibid*, Notes, pp. 1-2.
19. *BLCP*, Vol. 45, 17 March 1913, p. 398.
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21. *BLCP*, Vol. 48, 7 August 1916, pp. 384-385.
22. Resolution No. 391 T-G, General Department (Education), 13 June 1914, General (Education), GB, File No. 8R-11, A August 1914, Progs. Nos. 77-89.
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38. L. S. S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General, to Secy., GB, Education, No. 461 T-Edn., 24 July 1920, General (Education), GB, File No. 8R-22, B December 1920, Progs. Nos. 282-283.

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40. Note by H. L. Stephenson, 6. 2. 1920, Appointment (Reforms), GB. File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs. Nos. 3-10, Notes, p. 14.

41. *Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill,* (Delhi, Superintendent. Government Printing, India 1919), pp. 6-7.

42. Quoted in Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs. Nos. 3-10, Notes, p. 13.

43. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 6R-37, A September 1919, Progs. Nos. 2-4, Notes, p. 5.

44. Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs, Nos. 3-10, Notes, p-13.

45. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 6R-37, A September 1919, Progs. Nos. 2-4, Notes, p. 5.

46. Telegram from Bengal, Appointment, Darjeeling, to India, Home, Simla, 15 September 1919, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No.-6R-37, A September 1919, Progs. Nos. 2-4.

47. S. P. O'Donnel Secy., GI, Reforms, to Chief Secy., GB, No. 156F, 28 January 1920, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2. A April 1920, Progs, Nos. 3-10.

48. Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs. Nos. 3-10, Notes, p. 13.

49. Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61, Notes, p. 3; Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India,* (Delhi, 1984), Table 13, p. 126.

50. Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs. Nos. 3-10, Notes, pp. 13-14.

51. H. E. Spry, Addl. Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Reforms, No. 677, A. R., 24 March 1924, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 6R-2, A April 1920, Progs, Nos. 3-10; also, Appendix B.

52. H. Tonkinson, Secy., GI, Home. to Chief Secy., GB, No. F-290-25, Public, 21 May 1925, Appointment (Appointment) GB, File No. 6R-42, A July 1925, Progs, Nos, 3-4.

53. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 6R-42, A July 1925, Progs. Nos. 3-4, Notes, pp. 3-5; *Report, Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919,* (Calcutta 1919), vol. I, Part I, p. 189.

54. *Census of India,* 1921. Vol. 1, p. 225; Vol. V. Part-I, p. 365; also, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61, Notes, p. 4.

55. L. Birley, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, No. 1419 A-D, 22 June 1925, Appointment (Appointment), GB. File 6R-42, A July 1925, Progs. Nos. 3-4, also Notes, pp. 3-7.

56. *BLCP*, Vol. I, No. 5, 14 March 1921, p. 43.

57. General (Miscellaneous), GB, File No. 8D-1, B May 1913, Progs. Nos. 126-128, Serial 1.

58. General (Education), GB, File No. 11C-112, A December 1919, Progs. Nos. 244-254, Notes, p. 2, Appendix.

59. H. McPherson, Secy., GI, to Chief Secy., GB, No. 1915, 13 September 1920, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 8P-40 of 1920, A November 1921, Progs. Nos. 38-41.

60. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A November 1922, Progs. Nos. 114-417, Notes, pp. 1-2, 7.

61. Notification No. 5798A—The 27th May 1922; Memorandum for Guidance [of the] Selection Committee, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A November 1922, Progs. Nos. 114-417, also Appendix F, p, xvii.

62. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A November 1922, Progs. No 114-417, Appendix E, p. xv, Appendix F, p. xx.

63. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A October 1923, Progs. Nos. 3-19, Notes, pp. 2-3, 9-11, Appendix A, p. iii.

64. Notification No. 7721A—The 30th July 1923; Memorandum for Guidance [of the] Selection Committee, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A October 1923, Progs. Nos. 3-19.

65. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-1, A October 1923, Progs. Nos. 3-19. Appendix A, p. xvi.

66. Education (Education), GB, File No. 11C-92, A December 1923, Progs. Nos. 8-9, Notes, pp. 1-2; Education (Education), GB, File No. 11C-105, B December 1923, Progs. Nos. 1033-34.

67. H. E. Stapleton to W. B. Finnigan, Offg. A. D. P. I., D. O. No. 230-VIIM-3, 17 November 1922, Education (Education), GB, File No. 11C-205, A November 1922, Progs. Nos. 98-99, Appendix; Financial Position of the Society, Education (Education), GB, File No. 1E-4, B December 1926, Progs. Nos. 306-313.

68. D. P. I., Bengal, to Secy., GB, Education, No. 175/3P-5P-26, 17 February 1926, Education (Education), GB, File No. 1E-4, B December 1926, Progs. Nos. 306-313; Education Dept., GB, to D. P. I., Bengal, No. 1029-31 Edn., 4 March 1927, Education (Education), GB, File No. 1E-3, B July 1927, Progs. Nos. 28-30.

69. Education (Education), GB, File No. 1H-68 of 1926, B June 1927, Progs. Nos. 52-54, Abstract; *BLCP*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 21 February 1927, p. 5.

70. Education (Education), GB, File No. 11C-47, B September 1927, Progs. Nos. 241-243, Abstract.

71. Viceroy to Governor of Bengal, 14 July 1928, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114, A November 1928, Progs. Nos. 15-16, Notes, p. 1.

72. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114, A November 1928, Progs. Nos. 15-16, Notes, pp. 2-3 ; Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114 of 1928, A February 1930, Progs. Nos. 7-20, Notes, p.5.

73. Report [of the enquiry] ; H. E. Stapleton, D. P. I., Bengal, to Secy., GB, Education, No. 378, 22 March 1929, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114 of 1928, A February 1930, Progs. Nos. 7-20.

74. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114 of 1928, A February 1930, Progs. Nos. 7-20, Notes p. 8.

75. Note By P. C. Mitter, 24-9-1929, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 5M-114 of 1928, A February 1930, Progs. Nos. 7-10, Notes, pp. 2-6.

76. A. J. Dash, Secy., GB, Education, to Secy., GI, Education, Health and Lands, No. 912T. End., 23/24 September 1930, Education (Education), GB, File No. 1E-6, B December 1930, Progs. Nos. 256-257, also, Notes, pp. 2-3, 5.

77. W. S. Hopkyns, Chief Secy., GB, to all Commissioners of Divisions, Nos. 1874-8 A-D, 7 October 1929, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-146, A December 1929. Prog. No. 5.

78. Correspondence with district officers in Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1D-146 of 1929, A September 1930, Progs. Nos. 12-17, also, Notes, pp. 3-5, Appendix A and B.

79. R. H. Hutchins, Addl. Dy. Secy., GB, Appointment, to all Commissioners of Divisions, No. 10622-626 A, 12 August 1930, Appointment (Appointment), GB. File No. 4D-15 of 1929, A August 1930, Progs. No. 6 ; also, Notes, pp. 4-5.

80. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No 4D-10 of 1930, A June 1931, Progs. Nos. 36-41, Notes, pp. 2-3.

81. Appointment Dept., Government of Bengal, Memorandum—Nos. 3540-3554 A, 28 April 1931, Education (Miscellaneous), GB, File No. 3S-1, B June 1931, Progs. Nos. 44-46.

82. *BLCP*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 23 March 1933, pp. 634-635 ; Vol. 41, No. 3, 3 April 1933, pp, 192-193.

83. H. E. Stapleton, D.P.I., Bengal, to Secy., GB, Education, No. 1147, 27 October 1930, Education (Education), GB, File No. 7S-3, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 34-36.

84. Education (Education), GB, File No. 7S-3, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 34-36, Notes, p. 1.

85. H. R. Wilkinson, Secy,, GB, Education, to D.P.I., Bengal, Nos. 1510 Edn., 27 April 1932, Education (Education), GB, File No, 7S-3, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 34-36.

86. Telegram from Home, New Delhi, to Bengal, Calcutta, No. 2881, 20 December 1932, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 2/33.

87. R. N. Reid, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, D.O. No. 7922 P.S., 30 December 1932, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 2/33.

88. C.M. Trivedy, Dy. Secy., GI, Home, to Chief Secy., GB, No. D323-33 Poll, 25 January 1933, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 2/33.

89. H.G. Hallet, Secy, GI, Home, to Chief Secy., GB, No. D1281/34 Poll., 24 February 1934, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 210/34.

90. Note by C.C. Ghosh and B.P. Singh Roy, 14. 3. 1934, Home (Confidential), GB. File No. 210/34, Notes, p. 3.

91. Note by G. P. Hogg, 12. 3. 1934, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 210/34, Notes, p. 3.

92. Chief Secy , GB, to GI, Home, No. 1591 P. S., 19 March 1934, Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 210/34.

93. See, telegram from Secy., All India Varnashram Sangh and Temple Defence Committee, Calcutta, to Home Member, Simla ; also Gen. Secy., Shree Sanatan Dharma Sabha, to Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, 30 August 1934, Home (Political), GI, File No. 50/8/34-Poll.

94. *Report, Indian Statutory Commission*, (Calcutta, 1930), Vol, I. p. 39.

95. *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 67.

96. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1R-54, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 43-83, Notes, pp. 28-29.

97. *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.

98. *Ibid*, pp. 30-32, 34-36.

99. H. Graham, Special Officer, GB, to Jt. Secy., Indian Franchise Committee, No. 7126A, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1R-54, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 42-83.

100. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 1R-54, A April 1932, Progs. Nos. 42-83, Notes, pp. 30, 36.

101. *Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee*, (Calcutta, 1932), pp. 4, 24.

102. Note by R. N. Gilchrist, 20.6.1932 ; Decision in Joint Meeting held on 25th June, 1932, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-140 of 1932, B July 1933, Progs. Nos. 16-60 ; Appointment, GB, File No. 1E-25, B September 1933, Progs. Nos. 9-37, Abstract.

103. 'Communal Decision', 4 August 1932, Home (Political), GI, K. W. to File No. 41/5/32-Poll. According to the Decision, in a house of 250 members in Bengal, 80 were declared to be general seats, out of which 10 were

earmarked for the depressed classes. The rest of the seats were distributed as follows : Muslims-119, Indian Christians-2, Anglo-Indians-4, Europeans-11, Landholders-5, Universities-2, Labour-8, Commerce, Industry, Mining and Planting-19.

104. Marc Galanter, *op. cit.*, p. 31,

105. Private Secy. of Viceroy to Governor, Bengal, Telegram No. 672S., 25 September 1932, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-202 of 1932, A January 1933, Progs. Nos. 20-28.

106. Foreign, Simla, to Bengal, Darjeeling, Telegram No. 2136, 25 September 1932, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-202 of 1932, A January 1933, Progs Nos. 20-28.

107. 'Statement of His Majesty's Government Regarding the Poona Agreement', Appointment (Reforms), GB. File No. 1R-202 of 1932, A January 1933, Progs. Nos 20-28 ; telegram from Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, 25 September 1932, Home (Political), GI, K. W. to File No. 41/5/32-Poll.

108. Bengal to Foreign, Simla, Telegram No. 50, 26 September 1932, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-202 of 1932, A January 1933, Progs, Nos. 20-28 ; telegram from GB to Viceroy, 26.9.1932, Home, (Political), GI, K. W. to File No. 41/5/32-Poll.

109. Appointment, GB, File No. 8L-62, B May 1933, Prog. No. 419, Notes, pp. 2-3.

110. Appointment, GB, File No. 8L-15, B April 1933, Prog. No. 37, Notes, pp. 2-3.

111. Resolution by-The Government of Bengal, Appointment (Reforms) Department, No. 122 A. R., 16 January 1933, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61, also Notes, p. 4.

112. R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to All Commissioners of Divisions and all District Officers (except Chittagong Hill Tracts). No. 1790-1820 A. R., 4 April 1933, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs, Nos. 9-61.

113. R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to Reforms Commissioner, GI, D. O. No. 322 A. R.—D, 19 September 1933, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61.

114. R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, to C, K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, D. O. No. 866 A. R., 2 April 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-88, A November 1935, Progs. Nos. 27-39. The Christian converts from the depressed classes were enjoying special educational facilities along with other members of such classes since 1929, *cf*, Education (Education), GB, File No. 1E-8, B September 1929, Progs. Nos. 294-297, Abstract.

115. R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, to C. K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, D. O. No. 1736 A. R., 26 July 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-88, A November 1935, Progs. Nos. 27-39.

116. C. K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms to R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, D. O. No. F. 20/35F, 17 May 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-88, A November 1935, Progs. Nos. 27-39.

117. Reforms, Simla, to the Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, No. F20/35F, 8 October 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-88, A November 1935, Prog. Nos. 27-39.

118. The Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1936, [30 April 1936], Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-361 of 1935, A June 1936, Progs. Nos. 32-42; Note by R.N. Gilchrist, 17.12.1934, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-29 of 1934, A February 1935, Progs Nos. 1-15, Notes, p. 3 ; also see the petition of the Sutradhars in Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-29 of 1934, A June 1935, Progs. Nos. 12-24.

119. The Secy., Indian Association, Calcutta, to Reforms Officer, GB, 15 February 1933 ; the Secy., Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha, to Reforms Officer, GB, No. 4469, 15 February 1933 : R. C. Roy, Hony. Secy., Bengal Depressed Classes' Association, to Reforms Officer, 17 February 1933, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-2 of 1933, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61 ; also, *BLCP* ; Vol. 41, No. 2, 27 March 1933, pp. 572-573.

120. Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 4D-8, A July 1935, Progs. Nos. 23-24, Appendix C, Precis by E. N. Blandy, 14 January 1935.

121. G. P. Hogg, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, No, 10255A, 20 August 1934, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 4M-1 of 1933, A September 1934, Progs. Nos, 7-12 ; also, Memorandum No. 9898A, Government of Bengal, Appointment (Appointment) Dept. 21 September 1936, Appointment (Appointment), GB, File No. 4D-3 of 1934, A November 1936, Progs. Nos 31-44.

122. Note by R. N. Gilchrist, 23.8.1932, also, Appendix I & II, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-133 of 1932, A July 1933, Progs. Nos. 20-211, Notes, p. 3.

123. 'Appointment Department, Reforms, Mémorandum on the Scheduled Caste Constituencies for the Bengal Legislative Assembly', Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-30, A April 1934, Progs. Nos, 103-111.

124. Appointment Department, Reforms, Statement V : Allocation of Depressed Class Seats in Rural Areas, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-30, A April 1934, Progs Nos. 103-111, also, Notes, p. 22.

125. R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to W. H. Lewis, Reforms Office, GI, D. O. No. 2661 A. R., 27 December 1933, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-30, A April 1934, Progs. Nos. 103-111.

126. Reforms Commissioner and Jt, Secy., GB, to C. K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, D. O. No. 1768 A. R., 26 July 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-9 of 1935, A January 1936, Progs. Nos. 1-17; also Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-75, A July 1935, Progs. Nos. 29-40, Notes, p. 6.

127. Aprakash Gayen, Acting Secy., All Bengal Depressed Classes' Federation, to R. N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, 15 July 1935, Appointment (Reforms), GB, File No. 1R-9 of 1935, January 1936, Progs. Nos. 1-17.

128. 'Bengal Legislative Assembly Electoral Programme', Home (Constitution and Elections), GB, File No. R3 E-58, A May 1937, Progs. Nos. 92-125.

129. Reforms, Bengal, Calcutta, to Reforms, New Delhi, Telegram No. 3413, A. R., 30 January 1937, Home (Constitution and Elections), GB, File No. R3E-27, A May 1937, Progs. Nos. 1-13.

130. 'Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the second half of March 1937', Home (Confidential), GB, File No. 10/37.

131. *Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 14 March 1939, p. 324.

132. *Two Years of Provincial Autonomy in Bengal*, Publicity Department, Government of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1939), pp. 32, 48, 80, 275.

133. *Bengal Ministry and the Hindus of Bengal*, Publicity Department, Government of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1940), pp. 1-5.

134. So far as the British period is concerned, the term 'Protective Discrimination', seems to be more appropriate than 'Compensatory Discrimination' used recently by Marc Galanter. The fundamental assumption of the British was that the interests of the relatively backward communities needed special 'protection'. It was only after independence, that the Constitution of India proposed to 'compensate' the Scheduled Castes for the past discrimination they had been subjected to. *cf.* Marc Galanter, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3, and Chapter 3.

135. By taking advantage of the new opportunities, a number of lower castes in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries had gradually improved their socio-economic condition and on the basis of that had begun to claim a higher ritual rank as well. For details, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Caste, Class and Census : Aspects of Social Mobility in Bengal under the Raj, 1872-1931', *The Calcutta Historical Jaurnal*, Vol. V, No. 2, January-June 1981, pp. 93-128.

136. For details, *cf* Milton Gordon, 'Models of Pluralism : The New American Dilemma', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social*

Sciences, Vol. 454, pp. 178-188; also, his 'Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations', in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, (eds.), *Ethnicity : Theory and Experience,* (Cambridge MA : Harvard University Press, 1975).

137. Eugene Irschik, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India : The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929.* (University of California Press, Barkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p. 55.

138. Extract from a private and personal letter from Viceroy to Sir Samuel Hoare, His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, 13 February 1934, Reforms Office, GI, File No. 180/33-Reforms, Notes, p. 18.

139. W. A. Lewis to Hallett, GI, Home, 15. 12.33, Reforms Office, GI, File No. 169/33-R.

140. 'The Viceroy's Speech In Reply To An Address Presented By A Deputation of The Leading Members of the Depressed Classes on Wednesday, The 29th March 1933', Home (Political), GI, File No. 50/IV/33-Poll.

141. Note by M. W. Yeatts, 26.11.33, Reforms Office, GI, File No. 180/33-Reforms, Notes.

All records related to GI, were consulted at the National Archives of India, New Delhi and those related to GB, at the West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta.

EUROPEAN COMPANIES AND PRE-MODERN SOUTH ASIAN COMMERCIAL SYSTEM— A STUDY OF BENGAL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

SUSHIL CHAUDHURY

It is almost common knowledge by now, thanks to the researches of several trade historians in the last few decades, that the European Companies trading in South Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had to adjust themselves to the prevalent commercial system and tradition in the given areas of their trade. Seldom were the cases when the Companies could affect notable changes in the traditional system of commerce in the South Asian countries they traded with. Of course it should be admitted in all fairness that the activities of these Companies resulted in certain innovations as also modifications in the existing system which were in a way novel in the commercial order of the time, though these were probably not very significant in the overall structure of pre-modern South Asian commercial system.

In this essay I shall examine the Investment Pattern of the European Companies — mainly the English and Dutch East India Companies which were the major foreign trading concerns in Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century, and see how the Companies tried to achieve the twin goals of Investment and Procurement within the broad framework of the traditional commercial system. A few questions crop up in this connection. Did the Companies have to change the small details within the broad structure of traditional system ? What were the problems they had to face in their investment ? How did they try to solve them and

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with what success ? In the course of the discussion I shall try to answer these questions as far as possible, given the limitations of the source material. Though the illustrations will be taken mainly from the English East India Company, supplemented by those of the Dutch Company, the broad conclusions will be applicable to all the European Companies trading in Bengal, and for that matter, with minor changes in detail and allowance for local variations, will be valid in general for all the European Companies trading in different parts of South Asia during the period under review.

Investment Pattern

The succesful investments[1] of the European Companies in Bengal depended not primarily on the economic laws of supply and demand. The Companies had to face many a problem in securing their investments which were peculiar to the Indian situation. Their servants in India were not familiar with the market mechanism of the country and most often ignorant of the local language. Under the circumstances they had to depend for investments on a group of merchant-middlemen, generally under a Chief merchant often called broker by the Companies, in every major trading centre. Thus the Companies appointed local brokers in most of their factories and depended solely on them for the provision of their investments. The brokers helped the Companies in making contracts with local merchants — most often recommended by the brokers themselves — for provision of goods for the return voyage of the ships. These merchants, however, were required to be paid advance or *dadni* by the Companies on the amount contracted for. The *dadni* merchants in their turn gave advances to weavers, artisans and other primary producers through their *gomastas* or agents scattered through various production centres or *aurangs* to ensure the supply of goods at proper time and according to specified standards. The Companies, however, also purchased goods with 'ready money' at the shipping season but this invariably entailed paying a much higher price than at the normal time. Naturally they preferred, in order to minimise the cost price of commodities bought for export, the investment by *dadni* or advance payment system.

The Institution of Broker

As the European Companies had to resort to the *dadni* system or advance payment to merchants for their investments, they had to depend largely on the brokers who were responsible for the money advanced to the merchants. The merchants who worked on behalf of the Company for procuring the investments with such advances were called *dadni* merchants. Thus the practice of employing a broker became an integral part of the Companies' machinery for providing investments in Bengal. The custom of engaging a broker who was intimately connected with the investments of the Europeans in India was reported as being common by travellers like Fryer and Ovington during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.[2]

In Calcutta, Kasimbazar, Dacca and other factories in Bengal, the English Company contracted for the investments with the *dadni* merchants through the brokers who also helped in pricing and sorting of commodities brought in by those merchants. As the Company's investment in Calcutta was quite considerable, the office of the broker there became quite important and influential one. The office of the broker was equally important in Surat where one had to buy the office by offering a substantial sum but it was not the case in Calcutta.[3] It is important to note that these brokers though employees of the European Companies were themselves merchants of repute and substantial credit, and quite often conducted their own business quite independent of the Companies through their host of relatives and *gomastas.* As such, whenever these brokers were dismissed from the Companies' service, it did not absolutely ruin them as would be evident from the various evidence to be found in the Company records.

Calcutta Brokers

The two main families which provided most of the brokers to the English Company in Calcutta and Kasimbazar were the Seths and Katmas respectively. As the investments in Calcutta largely consisted of silk and cotton piece-goods produced by Bengali weavers, none could better play the role of a broker than the Seths who were themselves of the weaving caste. They together with the Basaks of

the same caste were then perhaps the most powerful groups, both economically and socially, in their community. Being firmly established in the site of Calcutta for generations before the arrival of the English and already acquiring great fortune by trade with the Europeans, not only did the Seths and Basaks command respect of the weavers' community, but also as their virtual leaders they could alone persuade them to work for the Company under their guidance. As the *dadni* merchants of Calcutta mostly belonged to their community, they could also exercise direct control over them as they wished. It was therefore not for nothing that the Seths filled the most important post of the Company's broker in the first half of the eighteenth century almost by hereditary succession.[4]

Towards the close of the seventeenth century Jayakrishna was the broker to the Company in Calcutta on a salary of Rs. 1000/- per annum but was dismissed from service in 1699 for accepting *dosturee* or brokerage from the *dadni* merchants.[5] Janardan Seth who was described by the Calcutta Council 'as the person best qualified for a broker' was appointed to the post on condition that he would be allowed 3/4 per cent brokerage on the value of total investment in Calcutta, in lieu of a regular salary.[6] Though a broker to the Company, Janardan was also an eminent merchant who supplied part of the Company's investment throughout the tenure of his office till he died in February 1712.[7] The Court of Directors in London looked down upon Janardan as a villain who, it alleged, through his malpractices cheated the Company, monopolised all the trade and thus amassed vast fortune for himself.[8] In January 1714 it wrote to the Calcutta Council : 'No wonder that the late broker Janardan declared himself several lack of Rupees who but a few years ago was Mr. Beard's servant and not worth one hundred rupees'.[9]

After Janardan's death, his brother Baranasi Seth was appointed the Company's broker. But the Directors regarded him too as the chief source of all the mischief leading to bad quality and high price of the English investments in Bengal. By now, it seems, the broker's power was immense and the Court was not prepared to tolerate such a position. The Directors ordered in 1716 that the broker's power and the 'Confederacy of the present merchants' set

up by him with his 'Relatives and Creatures' must be broken. They wrote indignantly to Calcutta : 'The exorbitant power of your broker is what we will never again bear with nor with those who are his advocates and support nor will we suffer any broker to rival much less to overstep our President'.[11] Again they complained, not without reason, that Baranasi was not only a broker but 'by himself and creatures' sold most of the goods provided for the Company.[12] When Robert Hedges succeeded Russell, he wrote frequently to the Court of Directors about the misdeeds of the broker and tried to curtail his power. He reported to the Directors that the President had set a bad example of depending wholly on Baranasi Seth and that he was so indifferent to investment that Baranasi and his family provided two-third of the investments, and influenced the sorting and pricing also. Till this was 'cured', held Hedges, there was no possibility of getting goods at cheaper rates. 'Benarse Seat ruled as much abroad as in the Warehouse, Revenues rose or fell as he pleased, the Collectors being his Creatures.'[13] Such was the power of the Seths as broker. But Hedges was not entirely in favour of removing Baranasi Seth but wanted only 'to hinder his power which prejudices the Company's Affairs', because 'it cannot be the Company's interest that the Chief Merchant should be Broker for if so Goods will come dear'.[14] The Court of Directors however was adamant and following its order, Baranasi was replaced in April 1715 by Ramkrishna Khan, a merchant of repute and influence in Calcutta.[15]

Both the Court of Directors and the Calcutta Council seemed gratified with Ramkrishna's appointment which resulted in better and cheaper investments for the Company. But the Directors at the same time cautioned the Calcutta Council in the following words: 'It will be incumbent on all of you to prevent this Broker getting the ascendant the last had. Encourage and support him in his place while he diligently performs his Duty but don't let him overstep you or be in effect Your Master.'[16] But Ramkrishna could not enjoy the coveted post for long and died in November 1716 when Harinath was made broker on the recommendation of Robert Hedges.[17] In the beginning this Harinath appeared to be 'able, diligent and faithful' from the goods he provided. But despite this, the Council observed that 'if he should prove unfaithful will turn

him out with disgrace and suffer no broker to have too great authority.'[18] But Harinath was primarily a servant of Hedges and the Council soon found him to be 'unskilled in goodness or value of muslins and of mean capacity and no repute.'[19] The Council wrote home that 'we wonder Mr. Hedges should put him in when he would not trust him in his own Affairs but Barnarse Seat.'[20] In April 1719 the Calcutta Council declared in a long minute that Harinath was altogether unsuitable for his job, and as it was looking for 'an honest experienc't man to direct the merchants in making the species of cloth', it thought the only competent person then in Calcutta for the office of the broker was the much maligned Baranasi Seth.[21] Thus Baranasi was reappointed broker in 1719.

The reasons for reinstating Baranasi in the broker's office, as the Council put it, were that he 'is perfectly capacitated for business and as honest as of his cast[e].'[22] The Council wrote home : 'The large and early investment will show his capacity, the goods are generally better made and cheaper than for sometime past.'[23] That Baranasi Seth was a capable man and that he was quite successful as a broker is evident from the Council's letter of 31 January 1722 : '... none but he could have influenced the merchants and secured the last and this years Investment on credit, he being bound with each merchant for what they borrowed of the shroffs, this shows his zeal for the Company's Interest.'[24] The Court of Directors too wrote to Calcutta Council appreciating the services rendered by Baranasi.[25]

It is evident from the records of the Company that the Seths were the only persons in Calcutta in the 1st half of the 18th century, who as the social and economic leaders of the weaving community, could serve best the interest of the Company. The case of Baranasi Seth proves beyond doubt there was none else in Calcutta in his time who could secure the Company's investments on better terms. Despite many a pious resolution by the Company, the power of the Seths could hardly be curbed, and as brokers they continued to exercise absolute control over the Company's investments.

Baranasi died in October 1724 and was succeeded by his brother Bishnudas Seth.[26] Justifying his appointment the Council wrote to the Directors that he appeared 'the properest Person on many Accounts, and principally in regard to his Credit in the Country

which is apparent from the recommendation of all the Government of Hugly in his favour and his being a very Substantiall Man, which will enable him upon an emergency to assist our Hon'ble Masters Affairs as Barnassoeseat did three years agoe.' As to his capacity for the post, it pointed out that 'we think him equall to any of the rest and the trust Barnassoeseat reposed on him by leaving him the sole Direction of his Affairs, show the good an opinion he had both of his Integrity and Capacity.'[27]

Notwithstanding this confidence on the new broker and his being presented with a 'seerpaw' and a horse as ordered by the Court, his conduct was called into question as early as January 1728.[28] It was alleged that he together with Umichand, a *dadni* merchant, has engrossed most of the investments, especially of the finer sorts, to the exclusion of most other merchants. On 21 July 1731 the Calcutta Council noted that the broker in collusion with Umichand has monopolised under fictitous names 'much the largest part of the Company's investment' and corrupted 'most if not all black servants in the cottah.'[29] Two members of the Council, Wastell and Bourchier, wanted immediate dismissal of Bishnudas. But the Council led by President Deane gave the following reasons for not turning out the broker 'at this season of the year': 'It is incontestable that the Merchants, who contract for investment, borrow large sums of money to carry it on before money is advanced, that many goods are purchased and that the Broker must be engaged on that account for relations and friends in a large sum of money and security for all the Merchants in general, wherefore his being displaced will immediately bring his creditors upon him and make advantages to themselves (at the several aurungs) by his disgrace...'[30] It was further argued by the Council that only recently the discredit of the Company's broker at Kasimbazar resulted in 'our credit almost gone with the shroffs and entirely ruined with Futtichund who was the only person that could assist us in any pressing occasion.'[31] This throws some very interesting light on the ramifications of the *dadni* system as also the delicately balanced credit mechanism on which the system was primarily based.

It is interesting to note that two members of the Calcutta Council, Humphrys Cole and Edward Carteret, submitted the results

of their 'enquiry into the state of the Broker's affairs',[82] wherein they came to the conclusion that 'the charges laid against him [broker] are unfairly represented and insufficiently proved'. They have shown in their report that the names of the merchants in the *dadni* list were not fictitious, only sometimes the contract in the name of one particular merchant was fulfilled by another, sometime a part of it and at other times the whole amount. Thus the contract in the name of Kunjabehari Seth 'who broke two years ago' was performed by Jagannath Seth and Gangacharan Basak. Similarly the contract in the name of Santosh Ghose who became insolvent was carried out by Krishna Chandra Khan and Balaram Pramanick. There was practically nothing unusual in this sort of commercial practice which seems to be quite in vogue during the period under review. We learn from the same report that Gangacharan Basak provided all the 'soosies' contracted by Umichand while the latter supplied 'Booran Cossaes' contracted by the former. As to the main leaders of the move to remove the broker, namely Samsundar Seth, Jagannath Seth and Paramananda Basak who complained that 'they have not the sums sett down to them', the report retorts : 'If they have it not, its given at their desire to severall of their dependents, which the Broker is ready to prove, and this has been so many years'. Regarding the fact that the entire investment of Malda was given to Umichand and his brother Kissenchand, the report affirms that 'they were the fittest men he [broker] knows to procure those goods' and it was given to them as others were reluctant to contract for Malda goods.

However in deference to the wishes of the Court of Directors, the Calcutta Council ultimately decided to remove Bishnudas Seth from the office of broker in March 1732, and Samsundar Seth, the son of the former broker Baranasi Seth was appointed broker in preference to Jadu Seth because the latter's 'great age and Infirmity of body will oblige him to leave a great share of the management to his son, who none of us think fit in anything of that consequence'.[83] It is interesting to note that the office of the broker passed on from one member of the Seth family to another without hindrance. This only means that there was no way out of the Seth family for the Company in procuring its investments in Bengal. Meanwhile the Court of Directors remonstrated to the Calcutta Council : '... it

appears that the greatest part of our Investment was provided by the relations and Friends of the late Broker, you must be guarded against this practice, which is naturally attended with bad consequences on a supposition that you are guided by his Judgment in the sorting or prizing our goods, and otherwise we dont see any use he is of, indeed it is alleged he is security for the money advanced to the merchants, but that amounts to a very great sum ... it would be much better to pay every individual merchant yourselves than to entrust a middle person.'[54] The Directors were apprehensive that the broker and the servants of the Company bought goods on their own accounts and sold them to the Company at an advanced price which, if it had been the case, 'easily accounts for the high prices given for silk, gurrahs and other goods' provided both at Calcutta and Kasimbazar. So they laid down a standing rule that 'none of our Covenant Servants or Brokers be directly or indirectly concerned in the goods prized' on the point of being dismissed from Service and suggested the abolition of the post of Broker.[55] The Calcutta Council stressed in its reply that it would guard against all the evils connected with investment as pointed out by the Court but 'as to having no broker cannot think it for the Company's Interest, it being certainly necessary to have somebody of Wealth and Reputation in that Capacity'.[56]

But the Court of Directors was hardly convinced and was now determined to abolish the post of broker. It is worth quoting at length from the letter it wrote to Calcutta touching upon the evils which grew out of the office of broker and the reasons for abolishing it: 'And whereas by means of our Brokers, several of our servants have been enabled to get credit amongst the shroffs and merchants to our great prejudice and loss, and we have good reason to believe that in all our factorys many other evils have been brought upon us in the course of Investments by their Influence, Therefore we do absolutely abolish the Said office of Broker, not only at Calcutta but also in our subordinate factorys, requiring you and all our Servants, to make our future contracts without the intervention of such a person, who by his influence and interest may not only abuse us in our Dadney, as has been formerly done, but also greatly prejudice us, by admitting or debarring merchants to or from transacting with us, who are not suited to his

interest.'[37] This raised considerable alarm both in Calcutta and Kasimbazar.

The Kasimbazar Council became very much concerned and wrote to Calcutta about the serious consequences the abolition of the broker's office would have in the procurement of investment as also the void it would create in the Company's relations with the government at a time when it was expecting a 'revolution' in the government. It pointed out further that 'the continuation of a broker there is absolutely necessary for the safety of the Hon'ble Company's estate ... the security of their money and effects there'.[38] The Calcutta Council deliberated on the issue and came to the conclusion that 'we cannot abolish that office here no more than at Kasimbazar without running a great risk of the Company's estate' and in view of the ill consequences that may attend our contracting with private merchants without some such person being security for the Dadney advanced them'.[39] So Samsundar Seth was continued in the office of broker for the time being and was confirmed in his office on 15 February 1739.[40] The Dacca letter to Calcutta pointing out the consequences of abolishing the broker's post is revealing. The factors at Dacca wrote that it 'will be Irritating the great men at Dacca by whose intercession this post [of broker] was given him [Manickchand] by which their business may be prejudiced if not entirely stopped'.[41]

Meanwhile the question whether the broker should be retained or not was debated by the Calcutta Council and in January 1739 it wrote to the Court listing up the reasons in favour of retaining the broker's office.[42] These reasons were: First, the principal 'end' in employing a broker was to secure the *dadni* advanced to the merchants and if the post is abolished, there would be no security for the money advanced as the broker only was responsible for the amount advanced. Secondly, the broker only knew the 'real circumstances' of the merchants and thus could advise the Council who are the merchants to be trusted with money. Thirdly, if the post was abolished, 'many parties will arise among the merchants' who could be suppressed 'by a Man of Fortune and Figure being at the Head'. Fourthly, 'though some few merchants have indisputable fortunes yet giving the investment to so few will be very prejudicial

by their advancing the prices more than a greater number can, 'who are a check upon one another' and hence the necessity for a large number of *dadni* merchants over whom the broker should rule.

The Court of Directors, however, was insistent on abolishing the office of the broker. In its general letter of 21 March 1740 it wrote that the *dadni* charged to the Company's accounts as paid to the merchants was not duly received by them and 'the Broker was doubtless Privy thereto'. It further alleged that the money was diverted to provide goods for the 'enormous' Private trade of the Company's servants 'And a Broker', the letter pointed out, 'is the Middle Person who cloaks all such collusions and malpractices, beside the Dustore of One Rupee nine annas p cent, or whatever is allowed to the Broker by the Merchants is a tax upon us, and our Investment comes out so much dearer to us.'[43] Hence it enjoined upon the Calcutta Council that its earlier order directing to abolish the broker's post be absolutely complied with at Calcutta, Kasimbazar and other subordinate factories. It further directed the council to procure the goods on the best and cheapest terms by contracting with the most reputable merchants.[44] The Calcutta Council at last decided on 3 January 1741 that the office of the broker would be abolished after that year's investment was completed and that it would henceforth contract for goods with the 'most substantial merchants'.[45] In July that year it informed the Court that 'they laid aside the office of the Broker' at Calcutta and other subordinate factories, and that the merchants entered into 'Joint Security Bonds' with Samsundar Seth, Bishnudas Seth and Umichand in three 'setts'.[46] In December the Council called the merchants and informed them that the office of the broker was abolished, and to secure the Company from bad debts proposed they should become 'jointly and separately bound one for the other for all sums advanced on Dadney' which the merchants refused. They presented three lists of merchants who proposed to be bound 'one for the other' with Samsundar Seth for the first list, Bishnudas Seth and Umichand the second, and Ramkrishna Seth for the third 'who are esteemed men of fortune and credit which was agreed to'.[47]

Captain Fenwick who claimed to have been in the East India Company's service for thirty years emphasized in 1747-48 the

necessity of employing a broker as 'the best times [regarding investments] have been under the management of the broker'. In advocating the re-appointment of the broker, he stated the important functions of the broker as follows: 'I shall state the duty of a broker against the maxim of having none; as he ought to be an excellent merchant himself so he ought to know every merchant's Capacity, Integrity and Circumstances he introduces to the Council to be employed; for it is not sufficient that he is answerable for the contracts, as to the sums, but that such people do conduct their affairs, that the Company be not disappointed of any part of their Investments. He ought to be so good a judge of cloth, even to know at first sight in what part of the country every sortment is fabricated.'[48]

Interestingly enough a few years later the Court of Directors changed its mind and asked Calcutta Council to revive the office of broker. It wrote to Calcutta in January 1753: 'We have taken great pains to enquire into the utility of the office of a Broker at Calcutta and ... it appears to us that the reviving that office upon the old footing will be of great service to the Company, as it will be the best means of carrying on our investment with regard to the quantity, quality and price.' And it empowered Calcutta Council to appoint such a person as broker who 'from his circumstances, capacity and reputation may be the best able to serve us'.[49] But by the time the suggestion reached Calcutta, the Company's pattern of investment has been changed from *dadni* to *gomasta* system.[50] The Calcutta Council wrote back that 'such an office can be of no manner of use in the present model of conducting the business.'[51] Even as late as 1755 the Directors asked the Calcutta Council to revive the office of broker[52] but the *gomasta* system for the procurement of investments had by then been firmly established, and there was absolutely no scope for a broker in the new system of investment.

Kasimbazar Brokers

The Company's broker in Kasimbazar from about the second decade of the eighteenth century was a merchant named Kantu. He claimed to have served seven Chiefs at Kasimbazar but was brought

to discredit in 1730 following his insolvency which resulted, as he alleged, from the extortions and undue privileges wrested from him by Stackhouse, the then Chief of the Company. He was indebted to Fatechand Seth, the famous banker, to the tune of Rs 2,15,000/- which he borrowed for the transactions of the Company's business. The Company seized Kantu's effects but Fatechand insisted that Kantu be reinstated in the office of broker and that he be paid the sum owed to him by Kantu. The affair dragged on for sometime and ultimately the Company paid Fatechand a part of his due but dismissed Kantu as broker.[53] Fatechand knew well the importance of the position of a broker of the Company and objected to Kantu's being called a 'Dellol'.[54] It appears from the proceedings of the Kasimbazar factory that Kantu was not only a broker to the Company but a substantial merchant on his own account, often freighting goods on European ships. In 1730 the proceeds of his *dosutties*[55] sent to Manila amounted to Rs 4,053 which was appropriated by the Company following his dismissal. He had connections with Calcutta investment too as we find that Baranasi Seth was his 'bondsman'.[56] As Company's broker the *dasturi* or commission on investment that he earned amounted to Rs. 1,20,000 (at the rate of Re. 1- 9 ans. per cent) but the Calcutta Council observed that 'as he is to be esteem'd at the Durbar and the Country round as our Broker, he is obliged to live up to that character and the numerous family depend upon will make that amount barely sufficient to defray his expenses.'[57]

The Kasimbazar Council dismissed Kantu in June 1730 and tried to appoint either Burro Datta or Hathu (Huttoo) Katma, the two substantial merchants of Kasimbazar but both refused on the plea that the season had far advanced for investment and that it would be impossible to make the investment unless the Company's dispute with Fatechand was resolved.[58] In October the Council sent for Burro Datta and acquainted him of his being appointed broker but was surprised to find he declined accepting the post directly, desiring time to consult his brother who was at Hughli.[59] However it ultimately appointed Hathu Katma, 'a man of unquestionable credit and the properest person for that post' as broker. He was also reported to be 'a man of considerable estate' and his father Nidhi Katma offered to be his security.[60] He enjoyed the

position for sometime but was dismissed in early 1737 following a complaint from Calcutta that he took four annas per seer for Mr. Barker, the chief at Kasimbazar, on the silk provided by the merchants, and the Calcutta Council ordered his immediate removal, and the appointment of a new broker. Accordingly Bally [Balai ? Balaram ?] Katma was appointed broker because of his 'great experience' in the Company's affairs and the 'great wealth that is in his family'. His security bond was signed by Benode Katma [61] Balai Katma continued in the post till 1741 when the office was altogether abolished in all the factories in Bengal.

The Kasimbazar Council was very much concerned at the abolition of the broker's office and wrote to Calcutta : '... consider how impracticable it is for us to come at the knowledge of the worth of any of the merchants here when there is no broker whose interest it is to tell us the truth and such an one has many ways to learn more exactly who are fit to be trusted than we can possibly do....'[62] Even some time after the abolition of the broker's post, the Kasimbazar Council wrote to the Court in 1748 underlining the bad effects of it : '... the abolishing of the office of broker has been by experience found highly detrimental to your Honours' affairs, especially in contracts for the investment, the merchants being come to such a pitch as to fix what prices they pleased on their goods, which evil they conceived could be cured by no other method than by a ruler over them, of Wealth and Credit of their own cast[e].'[63]

There can be hardly any doubt that the Indian broker of the European Companies played a crucial role in securing their investments and as such a significant function in the commercial life of Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century. He was the essential link between the indigenous commercial agencies and the centralised investment organization of the European Companies. Hume, the agent of the Ostend Company in Bengal wrote in 1730 : 'The English and Dutch, who are the greatest Traders in this Country, do their business wholly by their Brokers who are their principal merchants. Notwithstanding they have numbers of Rich men Established in their bounds, who need no Security but they find their business the best regulated by having their Merchants act in Concert, by means of their Broker, everyone taking upon him according to

his force, they know one another better than they can be known by Europeans.'[64] But the broker notwithstanding, as Hume pointed out, the *dadni* merchants had to make the contracts in their own names, and the Company was at liberty to reject or receive the merchants known to be of credit and substance though not recommended by the broker. Hume elaborates further the advantages of the system : 'By which you secure yourselves from having a Cabal being formed among your Merchants, to prejudice you in the price of your goods.'[65]

The brokers also played a vital role in the relation between the European Companies and the local administration. They often acted as mediators between the two parties and often helped diffuse a crisis. The post of the broker was so important and significant that even the ruling elite took active interest in the appointment of a broker. The Companies too on their part always tried to appoint someone who had influence with the local administration or at the durbar. The point is clearly borne out by the fact that when 'Sabra', the Company's broker at Dacca, died, the Council there reported that 'great solicitations have been made to us by the Dellols and Persons of the Greatest Importance' to appoint his nephew Manickchand as the broker. The Dacca Council 'not being able to find out a more proper person having great Interest at the Durbar, worth some money and much esteem'd in the place' agreed on 27 January 1738 to appoint Manickchand the broker at Dacca.[66]

The above analysis of the activities of the brokers and their relation with the English Company brings to relief certain interesting aspects of the role played by the brokers in the commercial sector of Bengal's economy. They were essentially middlemen who organized the procurment of the Company's investments, and though they were the Company's employees and as such subordinate to it, yet they were in no way subservient to it. They were not only mere brokers of the Company—that was only one facet of their activities — but merchants of repute and substantial credit, carrying on their own trade independent of the Company. This is very well illustrated by the career of Baranasi Seth, Bishnudas Seth, Samsundar Seth etc. The dismissal of Baranasi from the office of broker hardly affected

his position as an independent merchant, and he carried on his trade quite independent of the Company which was ultimately forced to re-employ him in the exalted office. Bishnudas' dismissal too had little effect on his own independent business, and later the Company accepted him as a 'substantial merchant' to be security for a group of merchants after the abolition of the broker's post. Samsundar too was regarded as a 'man of fortune and credit' by the Company even after he ceased to be a broker and accepted him as security for another group of merchants. More often than not these brokers had a strong link with the ruling elite which sometime even intervened in or tried to influence the appointment of a broker, as we have seen in the case of Bishnudas Seth in Calcutta and Manickchand in Dacca. There can be hardly any doubt that men like Baranasi Seth, English Company's broker at Calcutta, Indranarain Chaudhuri, French Company's broker at Chandernagore and Harekrishna Roy, Dutch Company's broker at Chinsurah were men of considerable wealth and social eminence in Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Problems in Investments and Measures Adopted

The European Companies had to face many a problem in securing their investments in Bengal. One of the major problems throughout the period under review was a chronic shortage of working capital. The problem of inadequate funds for investments was accentuated by the poor demand for the European Companies' imports to Bengal. Though the quantity of merchandise imported by the Companies was not generally large, the market for even this small amount was strictly limited. The only items for which there was a steady demand in Bengal were bullion and specie. But as their supply was seasonal and limited, the Companies had to explore additional means for financing their investments in Bengal. Moreover the Companies had to confront some peculiar problems in Bengal in converting the bullion and specie into local currency. Another difficulty that the Companies had to face was to provide funds for investment in the proper season which generally started after the shipping season was over. As the price of most of the commodities went up considerably (sometimes even by 40 to 50 per cent)[67] during the time of shipping, the Companies had to start contracting for

goods just after the departure of Europe-bound ships, that is, generally from February or March, and hence they always needed a stock to be left for such investments in India after paying for the previous year's supplies. Here we shall try to examine the various problems the Companies had to encounter in securing their investments and the measures adopted to solve them.

Chronic Shortage of Capital

The main problem which plagued the English Company as well as the Dutch and French was the chronic shortage of liquid capital to secure the investments almost throughout the period under review. After the Europe ships had left by February or March at the latest, and when it was the best time for giving out *dadni* or advance for next year's investment, the Companies were left with little money. The problem was aggravated by the fact that often the Companies failed to pay the arrears due to merchants for the previous year's investment. Almost every year at this time, with the departure of Europe ships and the time for investment approaching, the merchants would clamour on the one hand for payment of their arrears for the previous year and an advance for the next year's investments on the other. The Council of the different European factories was often in a helpless position. The Calcutta Council of the English Company noted in 1720 that their merchants were 'very uneasy and daily complaining for want of usual advancement on Dadney besides their last years arrears due to them'.[68] The situation was sometimes exasperating as is apparent from the Fort William Consultations of 29 May 1721 : 'There being due...[a large amount] to our merchants on balance of the past year's account and we having no money to clear off those balances or advance them on this years contract ... they are very clamorous for either money or bills at Interest to be given them alleging they cannot perform the new contract without being forced to borrow all the money they can gett at Interest to send to the aurungs'[69] The problem continued to plague the Company. Even as late as 8th August the same year (1721) the Council noted in desperation : 'We as yet having no news of any ship from England Our merchants are very clamorous for the Dadney to be advanced them on the goods contracted for this

year, and insist upon giving them Bills of Debt for that and the Balance of their last years account.'[70]

Local Credit Market

Naturally the Companies had no other way of solving the problem of shortage of working capital but by borrowing from the local credit market. Luckily for the Companies, the credit market in Bengal was highly organized and efficiently managed. There was indeed a remarkable growth of the financial machinery for credit and exchange, and the specialized activities of a large class of merchants, especially the *shroffs*, undoubtedly point towards the fact that merchant capital and commercial organization were highly developed in early eighteenth century Bengal. So the European Companies tried to solve the problem of acute shortage of working capital by borrowing heavily from the local money market. Though there is no systematic account of the amount borrowed yearly in different factories, quite a few references here and there in the records give an indication of the sum borrowed at different times in different factories.

Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, the English Company's debts to merchants in Calcutta and Kasimbazar at certain specific dates amounted to around Rs. 7 lakhs and Rs 2½ lakhs respectively.[71] In 1720-21 the Company's debt in Bengal amounted Rs. 24 lakhs while the amount of debt turned out to be Rs. 55½ lakhs in 1747/48 (this too exclusive of interest).[72] The Dutch Company also borrowed from the local capital market. Its debt to the Kasimbazar merchants (with interest) in September 1724 amounted to Rs. 14,72,418.[73] Even at the risk of a little digression, it is worthwhile to have a close look at the name of the merchants to whom the Company was indebted. It is a pity that the list which could have thrown significant light on the social composition of the merchants and the regions they came from gives only the first name of most of the merchants, leaving us in darkness about their last names. Yet the list provides with certain interesting clues. Though the names are often mentioned as Ramnath, Jadu, Kunja, Kartick, Paran etc. (typical Bengali names !), luckily enough the Katmas are mentioned with their full names.[74] The list

mentions name like Lahorimal, Onupchand, Teakchand, Bhirguram etc. who probably came from other parts of India (West or North ?). But the most interesting part is that we find the Panjabi merchants with the surname of Kapur (Caporeij in Dutch, Coppree in English) whom we meet for the first time in the records.

Among the main creditors of the Company, the house of Jagat Seth is unfailingly there even in that early period. In two separate entries the credit of the house to the Company totalled Rs 2,55,986.[75] The Katmas were not lagging much behind. According to the list, wherein there are as many as 8 Katmas, the Company owed them Rs. 2,07,424 of which the breakdown is as follows :

Balai[76] [Bolley]	Katma	—	Rs. 16,294
Loknath	Katma	—	,, 13,036
Panchu [Poutsjou]	Katma	—	,, 16,796
Raghu [Raggo]	Katma	—	,, 49,259
Ramchand [Ramsjent]	Katma	—	,, 26,735
Satu[77] [Satoe]	Katma	—	,, 34,608
Bhuban [Bouwaan]	Katma	—	,, 18,919
Jagu [Jegu]	Katma	—	,, 31,147
			Rs. 2,06,794

Of the 79 merchants in the list, the Company owed more than Rs. 20,000 to only 20 merchants, and besides the House of Jagat Seth and the Katmas, the prominent creditors of the Company were the following :[78]

Onupchand	—	Rs. 43,064
Gopinath	—	,, 36,321
Kunja	—	,, 34,310
Nimoe	—	,, 44,010
Ramballabh	—	,, 33,281
Kommelain (?)	—	,, 31,839
Lahorimal	—	,, 62,948
Golabray (Golap Ray ?)		,, 52,608

Coming back to the story of the borrowings by the European Companies, we find the Ostend and the French Company also

borrowed freely from the local capital market. The Ostend Company was lent money by the local *shroffs* and merchants. Alexander Hume, the Chief of the Company in Bengal, reported in 1730 that among other merchants, Nainsook Babu, a near relation of Jagath Seth Fatechand, had lent large sums of money to the Company.[79] Similarly the French too relied heavily on the local money market for securing its investment. Fatechand was indispensable to them as their most important money lender. Though Dupleix described Fatechand as the 'greatest of Jews' and 'our chopping-block', he often had to seek loan of one to three lakhs from him.[80] He had to borrow money also from the rich and powerful family of merchants and money-lender of Kasimbazar—the Katmas.[81] Of course the most substantial lender to the European Companies was the house of Jagat Seths in the period under review. Even in the early years between 1718 and 1730, the English Company borrowed from the Jagat Seth at Murshidabad on an average more than 4 lakhs of rupees a year.[82] In the three years between 1755 and 1757 the Dutch debt to the house of Jagat Seths amounted to Rs. 23,85,803.[83] In 1757 alone the Dutch borrowed 4 lakhs from the Seths and the French debt at the time of the fall of Chandernagore amounted to one and a half million of rupees.[84] Captain Fenwick estimated the French debt in 1747-48 to be 'upward of 17 lakhs' while Watts wrote to Clive on 18 February 1757 that the French owed some 13 lakhs to the Seths.[85]

Though the English Company borrowed money locally in all the factories in Bengal, Kasimbazar was one of the main centres where it procured money freely for investments. The reason was two-fold : first, a lot of the Company's investment was made here ; secondly, because of the presence of a large number of big merchants and *shroffs* from various parts of India in Kasimbazar which was the most important trade mart of Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century, money was freely available. The Council at Kasimbazar often borrowed quite a large amount of money for securing the investments at the right season. Thus we find in March 1728 it borrowed Rs. four lakhs for giving advances for investments.[86] But the Court was not very happy with this large amount of borrowings at high interest. It wrote to Calcutta with great concern that 'upwards of 4000 £ sterling was paid for

interest' at Kasimbazar during the year May 1730 to April 1731, besides Rs. 6,43,832 'running at the extravagant rate of twelve percent per annum from that time' and that the Kasimbazar factors had borrowed another Rs. 2,57,180 afterwards. It asked the Calcutta Council that high rate of interest (at 12 per cent) which was 'canker to the Company's estate' should be rooted out.[87]

But despite all the reprimands from the Directors, the different factories in Bengal borrowed heavily from the local credit market almost throughout the period under study. Even as late as 1745 the Company's debt at Calcutta amounted to Rs. 9 lakhs whereas in Kasimbazar and Dacca it was computed at Rs. 10 lakhs.[88] The English debt at Dacca in 1749 amounted to Rs. 7,55,400. Of this amount as big a sum as Rs. 5,84,000 was due to the house of Jagat Seth and the rest to 'several other shroffs'.[89] In Calcutta in the course of a single day only in 1743 the English Company borrowed a sum of Rs. 8,25,000 from the following merchants:[90]

Bishnudas Seth	Rs. 1,10,000
Chaitanya Charan Seth	Rs. 50,000
Anunchand	Rs. 1,00,000
Hazarimal	Rs. 80,000
Gangabishnu [Mendrew ?]	Rs. 40,000
Rashbehari Seth	Rs. 50,000
Rashbehari Seth	Rs. 50,000
Ramkrishna Seth	Rs. 75,000
Krishna Chandra Datta	Rs. 50,000
Kunja Katma	Rs. 51,000
Sabram [?]	Rs. 1,00,000
Dulichand	Rs. 69,000
	Rs. 8,25,000

And just a week later, the Company borrowed of the Jagat Seths a sum of Rs. 3,26,750 for paying advances for its investments.[91]

In this connection it should be emphasized that the mainstay of the capital market in Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century was the famous banking house of the Jagat Seths. The house had grown itself gradually into a great financial institution during the period under review.[92] It came to the rescue of the

European Companies, which as we have seen earlier, suffered from a chronic shortage of working capital. So they borrowed heavily and freely from the house throughout the period of our study. The extent of the reliance on this banking house by the English Company will be evident from the fact that even in the subordinate factory at Dacca where the investment was quite small compared to that in Calcutta or Kasimbazar, it borrowed a sum of Rs. 4,70,000 in the period between 3 December 1744 and 20 October 1745.[93] In Kasimbazar the Company owed the Seths an amount of Rs. 8,36,037 in 1746 and Rs. 6,30,213 including interest in 1748.[94] Even in 1751 the English debt to the banking house in Kasimbazar amounted to Rs. 5,62,820.[95] In Calcutta on one single occasion in 1742 the Calcutta Council borrowed Rs. 2 lakhs from the Jagat Seths.[96] The Company preferred to borrow from Jagat Seth Fatechand 'as he might prove serviceable at the Durbar'.[97]

The Jagat Seths lent money to the Europeans at the rate of 12 percent per annum which was the prevalent rate at the time. But consequent to a request from the English Company to reduce the rate of interest to 9 percent the banking house lowered the rate accordingly in 1740.[98] Following this the interest rate charged by other *shroffs* or bankers was also reduced to 9 percent.[99] But still the Company preferred borrowing from the Seths. The Kasimbazar Council noted in 1741 : 'Futtychund having favoured us in lowering the Interest and as we are apprehensive he may be displeased, should we take up money of other people and so raise the interest again on us, agreed that we give him preference.'[100] It borrowed Rs. 2,01,000 from the house on 8 March 1741 but on 27 March when informed by Fatechand that he could not lend more than Rs. 50,000, it decided to borrow from the following merchants :[101]

Dayaram Mayaram	Rs. 20,000
Prankissen	Rs. 20,000
Harryballav Das	Rs. 10,000
Jagat Seth	Rs. 50,000
Lahorimal Harkissen	Rs. 50,000
	Rs. 1,50,000

In Kasimbazar, however, the Katma family dominated the list of merchants from whom the Company borrowed in the

thirties as will be apparent from the following list dated 26 March 1733.[102]

Golab Katma	Rs. 40,000
Indranarayan Katma	Rs. 60,000
Chuckoo [Chaku] Katma	Rs. 50,000
Raghunath Katma	Rs. 25,000
Priti [Preet] Katma	Rs. 25,000
Lahorimall Mansookray	Rs. 30,000
Manikchand Ananchand	Rs. 40,000
Lalaram Singh	Rs. 30,000

In June 1733 the Company owed Rupees 72,800 to Sachi Katma alone.[103]

In Calcutta too the Company borrowed from other merchants and *shroffs*, the Seths of Calcutta predominating the list of such merchants as would be evident from the following list.[104]

Anandchand[105]	Rs. 1,00,000	Rashbehari Seth	Rs. 50,000
Bishnudas Seth	Rs. 60,000	Anandchand	Rs. 49,000
Sebaram [Katma]	Rs. 50,000	Anandchand	Rs. 45,000
Ramkrishna Seth	Rs. 50,000	Laksmichand Seth	Rs. 45,000
Baburam Katma	Rs. 50,000	Nidhiram Das	Rs. 40,000
Shyamal Das	Rs. 50,000	Anandaram Seth	Rs. 38,859
Sahibram (?)	Rs. 50,000		

Total Rs. 6,77,859

Not that the Company always borrowed from big *shroffs* or merchants ; it borrowed even from small merchants too and also in small amount as was available. This is apparent from the list of borrowings in Kasimbazar on 24 April 1743 :[106]

Thakurjee Acherjee	Rs. 20,000	Dayaram Thakur	Rs. 50,000
Nainsook Nath	Rs. 5,000	Buckorsingh [?]	Rs. 8,000
Satu Katma	Rs, 10,000	Jamuna Das	Rs. 3,000
Anandaram Coppree [Kapur]	Rs. 10,000	Kissenchunder	Rs. 3.000
Gobindram Karfarma	Rs. 35,000	Kirtichand Katma	Rs. 3,300
		Dayaram Mayaram	Rs. 15,000

Total : Rs. 1,62,300

Similarly in Dacca too the Company procured money from the local credit market even in small amount for securing its investments. Thus we find that as late as April 1750 it borrowed an amount of Rs. 77,000 at 9 percent from the following merchants :[107]

Kinkar Das	Rs. 8,000
Santiram	Rs. 7,000
Sobharam Poddar	Rs. 7,000
Harri Krishna Das	Rs. 12,000
Motiram Shaw	Rs. 15,000
Soberam [?]	Rs. 4,500
Onupchand Kissenchand	Rs. 4,000
Balaram Roy	Rs. 4,500
Koosalchand Motichand	Rs. 15,000
	Rs. 77,000

Generally the practice was to borrow money from merchants and *shroffs* in large amount either at Calcutta or Kasimbazar, and then to send the money to the subordinate factories in cash or by bills of exchange. As the biggest creditor of the Company was the house of Jagat Seth which had its *kuthis*[108] or agents in all the trade marts of Bengal (and also in most trade centres all over India), the Company borrowed from the house in all the subordinate factories. But as mentioned earlier, the Company also freely borrowed from other *shroffs* and merchants. It is interesting to note that in Calcutta many of the merchants from whom the Company quiet often borrowed money were themselves *dadni* merchants of the Company. The point is well borne out by the fact that on 15 May 1746 the Company borrowed Rs. 8,96,731 at 9 percent interest from the following merchants of whom many were Company's *dadni* merchants.[109]

Bishnudas Seth	Rs. 50,000	Brindaban Seth	Rs. 40,000
Sebakchand Seth	,, 43,000	Brigolldut [?] Seth	,, 30,000
Gokulchand Seth	,, 30,000	Raghunath Seth	,, 32,000
Raghumitra [and ?] Samjee	,, 21,000	Krishna Chandra Seth	,, 33,000
Brajamohan Basak	,, 30,000	Madhu Seth	,, 22,731
Anandchand	,, 100,000	Harimohan Basak	,, 29,000

Kebalkissen Mendrew [?]	,, 24,000	Gopimohan Basak	,, 26,000
Radhakissen Gindary [Girdhary ?]	,, 21,000	Jagganath Khan	,, 32,000
Rashbehari Seth	,, 1,31,500	Krishna Gobinda Chaudhuri	,, 31,000
Chaitan Basak	,, 25,500	Harrynarayan Khan	,, 25,000
Ramkrishna Seth	,, 41,000	Jayakrishna Katma	,, 32,000
Govinda Chandra Seth	,, 24,000	Nantu Katma	,, 25,000

Total: Rs. 896,731

It is significant to note that not only the merchants, bankers and *shroffs* lent money to the European Companies, often members of the ruling elite too invested their money with these Companies. The most conspicous case of such money lending by the ruling class, as to be found in the records, is that of Kissendeb [Krishnadeb ?] Poddar who was the *diwan* of Hakim Beg, the *pachotra daroga*,[110] and an important member of the administration.[111] This Kissendeb was reported to have great influence with the nawab and Hakim Beg, and a 'person of very great interest and authority in the government'.[112] He lent the English Company in Kasimbazar the following sums on different dates.[113]

2 January	1750	—	Rs. 25,000
1 March	1751	—	,, 50,000
25 March	1751	—	,, 50,000
17 May	1751	—	,, 25,000
11 November	1751	—	,, 25,000
6 April	1753	—	,, 50,000
4 May	1753	—	,, 100,000
16 August	1753	—	,, 10,000

It appears that most of the money that Kissendeb lent the Company belonged to his master Hakim Beg. Perhaps that is why after Kissendeb's death, Hakim Beg demanded from the Company in Kasimbazar the repayment of an interest note due to Kissendeb for Rs. 100,000 [principal] and the Kasimbazar Council paid the amount with interest to Hakim Beg on 31 May 1754.[114]

Problems in Borrowing

There is little doubt that the capital market in Bengal eased to a great extent the European Companies' problem of chronic shortage of working capital for investments. But it was not all smooth sailing for the Companies as they had to face various problems in borrowing in the local money market.

(a) Short term Loans :

One of the main difficulties in borrowing from Bengal's credit market was that as a general rule money was lent only on a short term basis throughout the period under review and there was no tradition of long term loan. As a result, the *shroffs* and merchants, including the banking house of Jagat Seths, demanded money as soon as the Europe ships arrived with their supply of treasure. It was as impossible for the Companies to repay so many creditors as it was to pay the merchants' arrears. Even the Jagat Seths often threatened the Companies with stoppage of their business if their money was not repaid at the usual time. The English factory at Dacca reported in November 1749 that Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai's *gomasta* 'absolutely insisted on the payment of the sum due to his master threatening in rough terms that in case of non-payment he would immediately put a stop to our Business'.[115] In Kasimbazar in 1749 it was with great difficulty that the Company could borrow from the Seths Rs. 1,20,000 which it agreed to pay the nawab in connection with the dispute of the Armenian ships.[116] The Kasimbazar Council wrote to Calcutta that the Seth's *gomasta* Ruidas 'complained heavily of our not having paid them anything this season of the large debt the Company owed them at that factory notwithstanding so much treasure had been imported by several ships lately arrived'.[117] The Seths were often importunate in recovering their money and insisted on being repaid the loan with the arrival of the ships which put the Company into great inconvenience. The Kasimbazar letter of 25 August 1750 illustrates the point clearly : '...the Seats on the arrival of the treasure sent to demand it and gave them to understand that they expected the whole of their debt at that factory should be paid off out of the money which might arrive by this year's shipping and instead of being able to raise a further

credit with them it was with the utmost difficulty they could obtain their consent to apply any part of what was lately sent them to the use of the investment ....'[118] The desperate situation that sometimes the factors were confronted with is amply clear from the Dacca letter wherein the factors reported in 1751 that the *gomasta* of the Seths insisted that the 'whole of the Debt to be immediately paid him' and they requested the Kasimbazar Council to prevail on Seth Mahtab Rai not to insist on the payment of any of the money that it might send them 'as it would stop their business and render it unpracticable for them to purchase any Ready money goods'.[119] A close study of the Company records reveals that in Bengal during this period money was lent for short term, generally for a few months and the interest was calculated at a monthly rate, and the loan not carried beyond a year.

(b) Occasional Scarcity

The Companies' problem was aggravated by the fact that there was occasional scarcity in the credit market resulting from various factors, the most important of which was the reluctance of the money-merchants and *shroffs* to show up money for fear of exactions from the government. Though this was true in general for the whole period under review, it became more acute in the wake of the Maratha invasions in Bengal in the forties and the early fifties. Even the great banking house of the Jagat Seths was not free from the fear psychosis. Of course one should remember that the nawab, Alivardi Khan, harassed by the Maratha incursions was badly in need of money to raise and maintain a large army, and hence spared almost none who possessed any money. So though very good friends of the nawab they were, the Seths were extremely scared of Alivardi's extortions. This is evident from Kasimbazar letter of 1746 : ' ... they have not a prospect of borrowing more ... for the scarcity of money is so great that it has been with some difficulty Futtichand's house has been able to pay for the bullion sold them ... .'[120] The Kasimbazar Council further added that 'at last it appears to us that if they [the Seths] have money, they don't care to produce it for fear of the Government'. If this was the position of the Seths who were the closest ally of the nawab and who wielded so much power in the political and economic life of Bengal during

this period, one can well imagine the attitude of other *shroffs* and money merchants.

Similar was the occasional scarcity of money in the credit market in Calcutta. Sometime the Calcutta Council would take up money at interest in Calcutta and send it to Kasimbazar and other subordinate factories. In 1746 the Calcutta Council wrote to the Kasimbazar Council that it tried hard to procure money at interest in order to supply Kasimbazar but 'the scarcity of rupees being so great that nobody can lend us that'. It recommended to Kasimbazar to borrow 'sufficient money' to secure the investments. But Kasimbazar Council also found it extremely difficult to borrow from the capital market.[121] The situation was no better at Patna, 'they [Patna factors] being out of cash and none of the shroffs in town caring to lend any money at interest'.[122] The impression one gets from the records of the Companies is that sometime this scarcity of money in the credit market was quite an inconvenience for the Companies, especially in the forties of the eighteenth century.

A significant as also an important factor for the occasional scarcity of money in Bengal's capital market was the fact that the availability of money depended to a large extent on the rate of exchange to Agra. If the latter rate was high, money would become scarce in Bengal, the reason being the *shroffs* and money merchants would then employ their money in the exchange to Agra, which was more profitable than lending even at 12 per cent. This was the general pattern of money market in Bengal throughout the second half of the seventeenth century and early decades of the eighteenth. Our point is well borne out by the letter of the Kasimbazar Council which noted in 1700 : 'We cannot get any money at interest here being very little ready money in the country and the exchange current from hence to Delhi and Agra is but 6 per cent and the shroffs make use of what ready money they have that way'.[123] From about the third decade, however, one does not find reference in the records to money being employed in exchange to Agra. Probably by this time the banking house of the Jagat Seth had already extended its sway in the money and exchange marts of Northern India which perhaps resulted in a stability in the market, and the wide fluctuation in the exchange rate eliminated.

(c) **High Rate of Interest :**

The high rate of interest, which was the prevalent rate in Bengal till 1740, was quite a deterrent for the Companies borrowing in the local money market. The Home authorities always discourged taking up money at 12 percent which they considered 'exorbitant' and hence 'rank poison' to their commerce. They often advised the different factories to 'desist' from running into debt, 'the interest of which eats deep and insensibly'.[124] But as we have noted, the servants of the Companies in Bengal could hardly avoid borrowing money and accepted the high interest rate as a necessary evil.

Though the house of Jagat Seth and consequently other *shroffs* reduced the rate of interest to 9 per cent in 1740, it was often difficult for the English Company to borrow money at that rate, especially in the subordinate factories. As if taking advantage of the helpless condition of the Company, the merchants and *shroffs* occasionally tried to impose a higher rate of interest. The Dacca factors wrote in August 1746 that 'as we find it will be impossible for us to raise any more money here under the rate of 12 per cent per annum Interest', they desired the Calcutta Council's permission to borrow money at that rate of interest.[125] The latter wrote back immediately that it 'positively ordered that on no account they give more than 9 per cent for money at interest for it would be of utmost ill consequence to our Honble Masters should they give a higher premium to any one person and we doubt not that who have money to spare will let them have it at the same rate as we get everywhere else'.[126] But the Dacca factors replied on 16th Sept. 1746 that they saw no possibility of borrowing money at 9 per cent 'having already tried all the shroffs in the place who insist on 12 per cent'.[127] Even as late as 12 October they wrote to Calcutta that 'they are sorry to inform us that all their endeavours to obtain money from the shroffs of that place at the rate of 9 per cent per annum have been fruitless'.[128]

The Calcutta Council believed that the situation in Dacca would improve with the coming of Europe ships with treasure. So when three ships from Europe arrived in October, it wrote to Dacca that 'we hope the arrival of these ships will give them credit to Borrow

money at the usual rate'.[129] But the Dacca factors reported in November that they 'can get no credit there'.[130] There was no improvement in the situation even in 1747 when the factors from Dacca reported that they could take up no money there under 12 percent interest [131] On the contrary the situation deteriorated as no Europe ships arrived even by November. The Dacca factory wrote that 'no one being willing to lend them a single rupee their credit being quite gone, none of the Company's ships arriving with any treasure'.[132] However, with the arrival of five ships from Europe with treasure, the Calcutta Council hoped 'it will raise their credit to enable them to go on with the Investment'.[133] But that was not to be. The Dacca factory reported in January 1748 that without a supply of money either from Calcutta or Kasimbazar 'it will be impossible to send down any Goods this season as they could get no money there.'[134]

Minting

The problem would have been much less for the Companies if they could coin freely the treasure which was imported to Bengal to pay for the export commodities. But despite their best efforts almost throughout the period, the Companies failed to obtain free minting privilege in Bengal. The main obstacle to such a privilege to the Companies was the house of Jagat Seth who, it seems, from the early third decade of the eighteenth century monopolised the business of the mint. The English factors at Dacca reported as early as January 1722 that they tried to obtain the use of the mint but 'Futtichund Shroff who it is said Trades for the Nabob hindered, fear it will never be granted, the Nabob gets so much by it'.[135] Nonetheless the Court of Directors urged upon the Calcutta Council to try to get the privilege of minting coins and wrote in one of its letters : 'We hope our now constituted President and Council will give us a convincing specimen of their ability and zeal for our Service among other things in obtaining the grant of Coynage We have so often and with such earnestness prest you to endeavour and shew'd you the loss we suffered and wherein in the sale of Silver and by the batta on our Madras rupees we can't add thereto.'[136] But all the efforts on the part of the Company came to nothing. Alexander Hume, the chief of the Ostend Company in Bengal wrote in 1730 that he did

not earnestly try for the minting privilege 'lest the Company lost a good friend in Fatechand who has the Tansal [tancsal-mint] almost wholly in his hands'.[137]

The Company's servants in Bengal, however, did not desist from trying to secure coining privileges in the Murshidabad mint. But they were at the same time conscious of the reality of the situation. Thus the Calcutta Council 'forbid' Patna in 1741 applying to the Court [Durbar at Delhi] for the 'liberty of the mint' as this would be of no use so long as Fatechand Seth was alive and 'in these unsettled times'.[138] Next year the Kasimbazar Council suggested that in view of the government's great need for money to ward off the Marathas, 'possibly a sum properly applied might even procure the liberty of the mint'.[139] But after serious consideration it gave up the idea because such a step might 'exasperate Futtichund so far as to make him impede the Company's business'.[140] Even as late as 1753 William Watts wrote from Kasimbazar that the establishment of a mint at Calcutta 'could not be effected with the Nabob as it would be overset by Jagatseat ... as he is a great gainer by being the sole purchaser of all Bullion imported'.[141] Though the Company secured the privilege of establishing a mint in Calcutta by the Treaty of Alinagar (February 1756), and established its protectorate over Bengal following the battle of Plassey (June 1757), the Seths still remained the main obstacle to Company's minting coins. The Bengal General Letter to the Court of Directors pointed out in December 1759 that as the coining of *siccas* in Calcutta interfered so much with the interest of the Seths that 'they will not fail of throwing every obstacle in our way to deprecate the value of our money in the country, notwithstanding its weight and standard is in every respect as good as the *siccas* of Murshidabad so that a loss of Batta will always arise on our money, let our influence at the Durbar be ever so great'.[142] Of course soon the story was very different, the Seths approaching their doom fast and the English having the stranglehold over the political and economic life of Bengal.[143]

Selling Bullion

The European Companies would have been in a much better position than they actually were, had it been possible for them to

sell the imported treasure in the open market or pay for their investments in bullion. But as a result of the monopoly of the mint business by the house of Jagat Seth, they were forced to sell their treasure imported to Bengal, both bullion and specie, to the banking house. The *dadni* merchants too were in general reluctant to accept bullion for their supplies, and only occasionally and very rarely agreed to be paid in bullion.[143] In 1746 the English Company offered bullion to the merchant in payment of what was 'due to them on account the investment' but they refused it alleging that nothing but 'Rupees would pass at the aurungs [and] that they could no ways turn the Bullion into Rupees but by selling it to Juggutseat's House who they were well assured would not buy it of them'.[144] Obviously the Companies had little choice but to sell the bullion to the Jagat Seths and they had to accept whatever price the house offered.

Though according to an estimate of Hedges (the then President in Bengal) and Feake in 1718, 240 *sicca* weight of English standard silver produced nearest to $218\frac{3}{4}$ *sicca* rupees, and the *shroffs* and merchants received sicca Rs. 210 : 7 : 9 for 240 *sicca* weight of silver after paying 5 per cent custom duties, the house of Jagat Seth generally paid Rs. 203 for 240 *sicca* weight.[145] On a visit to the Kasimbazar factory in September 1743 Fatechand Seth informed the English that the Nawab had tried the French silver in his own presence and adjusted the value at 205 *siccas* for 240 *sicca* weight and that if he found the English silver of the same fineness, he would allow the same rate to them. The Calcutta Council advised Kasimbazar to agree to the rate and to dispose of the bullion 'lying dead' (125 chests) there which would help them to pay the debts and lessen the 'heavy load of interest'.[146]

Fatechand made a trial of the English silver at the mint in November 1743 and submitted the valuation made at the mint as also the rates at which he would take it.[147] :

	Value in the Mint	*Fatechand's rate*
Estimates Pillar Dollars	@ 206 siccas per 240 sicca wt.	@ 204 siccas per 240 sicca wt
Mexico	,, 205 ,,	,, 203 ,,
French Crowns	,, 207 ,,	,, 205 ,,
Duccatoons	2 : 7 : 3 siccas each	2 : 6 : 9 siccas each

As the English silver consisted mainly of Mexico dollars, this rate was lower than what Fatechand said he would take at. While the Kasimbazar Council made representation to him, he shrewdly replied that he had not then tried the silver and that he would expect some profit over the value in the mint for his troubles which he thought 'little enough in the price he proposed to give'.[148] The Calcutta Council advised Kasimbazar that if representation to Fatechand proved 'ineffectual', then to let him have the silver but at the sametime 'to acquaint him that we cannot think of Importing any more silver if this is to be made a precedent of'.[149] Fatechand knew well that the Company was bound to import treasure in order to pay for its investments in Bengal and hence was least concerned with the English representation. The French and the Dutch too were in the same difficulty. The Kasimbazar Consultation of 18 November 1743 noted : 'The French are in the same dilemma as us having their bullion in the factory without being able to come to terms with him [Jagat Seth Fatechand] nor have the Dutch coined a Rupee having had a dispute with the Government which is not yet adjusted'.[150]

The Court of Directors, knowing little as it did about Bengal's money market, thought of some alternative measures of freeing from the clutches of Fatechand Seth. It instructed the Calcutta Council in 1745 in the following manner : 'By delivering our silver to the merchants at the current value as part of their dadney, it may prevent Fatehchund's lowering it according to his will and pleasure, on his shuffling in such an unheard of manner. Some of the other great shroffs should have been tryed, whereas offers being made to him only, flung the Power wholly into his hands off getting it at his own price'.[151] But as we have seen earlier the *dadni* merchants were almost 'averse' to take bullion in lieu of their supplies and no other *shroff* would even dare buy bullion from the Company.

The death of Fatechand in 1744, the Court earnestly hoped, would change the situation for better and it expected that the Company's bullion would now yield a higher price by Bengal Council's 'prudent management of his young successors in the Business'.[152] But unfortunately for the Directors, that was not to be as will be seen shortly. Fatechand's successors, Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and

Maharaja Swaroopchand actually tried to reduce the rate that was allowed by their grandfather. In June 1745 the Company requested the Seths to buy the bullion imported recently which they 'agreed to take at the prices paid for the last provided we will send it up there [Kasimbazar] for they will receive it nowhere else'. When the Kasimbazar Council proposed to them 'to raise the price to what Futtichund formerly paid' for the Company's silver, they absolutely refused to advance anything on the last price alleging that it was not owing to them but the government that the price was lowered.[153] Again in June 1746 the English wanted to sell their silver but Swaroopchand offered no more than the 'last price given namely 203 sicca rupees for 240 sicca weight'.[154] In October of the same year again the Seths agreed to take English bullion but refused to give 'more than last year'.[155] The Calcutta Council assessed the situation well and wrote to Kasimbazar : 'We cannot pretend to dispute the price of bullion with Futtichund's house at this time and that we agree to let them have it at the price of last year'.[156]

Soon the Jagat Seths raised another difficulty for the Company in the sale of its imported treasure. The Kasimbazar Council reported to Calcutta in November 1746 that Seth Mahtab Rai had started an objection in Kasimbazar price of silver at the rate of 203 *siccas* for 240 *sicca* weight stating that as he received the bullion in Calcutta he was expected to pay no more for it than it was sold there. If the Company wanted the Kasimbazar price, he was to be allowed the charges of sending the silver from Calcutta to Kasimbazar.[157] The Calcutta Council advised Kasimbazar to acquaint him that his *gomasta* demanded earlier the charges of carrying the silver to Kasimbazar but later on relinquished the demand. At the same time it urged Kasimbazar Council 'in case he persists in requiring it of them, they must agree to it rather than alter the price of the bullion'.[158] Next year the Seths refused to pay more than Rs. 201 *siccas* for 240 *sicca* weight 'alleging by way of excuse to the imposition that the profit thereon is not near so great as formerly occasioned by Rupees being made of finer silver than usual'.[159] The Calcutta Council wrote in utter desperation that 'we must submit thereto as we had it not in our power to resist their imposition, there being no other purchasers'.[160] The Seths

demanded a deduction of one per cent in the price of silver that they bought from the English in view of the charges and risk involved in bringing the silver from Calcutta to Kasimbazar. The Calcutta Council strongly objected to this and asked Kasimbazar Council not to give in to the Seths' demand.[161] But the Company could not hold against the Seths for long and agreed in October 1750 to allow the Seths 'to deduct half per cent in consideration of the risque and charges up'.[162]

Madras and Arcot Rupees

The Company's problem was accentuated by the fact that the Madras and Arcot rupees which it imported to Bengal were current only at a *batta* or discount which again was manipulated by the house of Jagat Seth to its advantage. One of the reasons why the Company wanted the minting privilege for coining *sicca* rupees was that 'at most aurungs Madras rupees go for no more than Current whereas siccas at 3, 4 or 5 per cent more, the merchants at Fort William take them at 10 per cent'.[163] The Kasimbazar Council reported in 1731 that at the 'instigation' of Fatechand, a representation was made to the nawab (though not true at all) that the English brought only Madras and Arcot rupees and no bullion that season whereupon the nawab had forbidden the currency of those rupees, and ordered that they should be received only as bullion. Fatechand was the first to pay obediance to the order by putting fifty thousand rupees into the mint to be melted down. But the other *shroffs* were 'very clamorous upon the occasion, as they are likely to be great sufferers by it'.[164]

The *batta* or discount on Madras and Arcot rupees rose or fell according to the manipulation of the Jagat Seths. The house could influence the nawab to issue orders relating to the *batta* on Madras and Arcot rupees in its favour. This is quite clear from the Bengal General Letter of 24 January 1737 : 'Futtichund has this year again influenced the Nabob to lessen the value of Madras and Arcot Rupees and procured orders that $107\frac{3}{4}$ of either should pass for no more than 100 siccas ... they used to pass $103\frac{1}{2}$ Madras for 100 siccas'.[165] Again in 1738 the nawab issued an order 'forbidding Arcot rupees to go current' and asking all persons that had any in

their possession to bring them to Fatechand's house to be changed into *siccas* 'which he had settled at Twelve and half per cent Batta on Arcot Rupees'.[166] Similarly in 1750 the Seths obtained an order from the nawab which 'forbids all persons besides themselves from purchasing any silver or taking any Arcot rupees'.[167] The Company was helpless in the face of these impositions and could hardly do anything but to submit with a grudge. Even as late as 1752 the *diwan* Roy Kiritchand ordered that all money whether bullion or rupees must be sent to the mint at Murshidabad to be coined into *siccas* or disposed off to the house of Jagat Seth, and that the Company should not pay any money to its merchants except in new *siccas* as 'no others are to pass current in the country'. The Company found that on disposing of the Arcot rupees to Jagat Seth's house 'they will allow us only 87 : 11 : 3 sicca rupees for 100 Arcot rupees and ninety two siccas for one hundred Bombay Rupees, by which a difference arises on the Arcot Rupees of about 14 per cent and on Bombay 9 per cent which is $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent more than the Batta was on Arcot Rupees in the year 1750'.[168]

The *dadni* merchants too were often reluctant to take Madras or Arcot rupees in payment for their supplies because of the fact they suffered loss in exchanging those rupees for *siccas*, thus adding to the Company's difficulties. In 1738 the Kasimbazar Council acquainted the merchants that it expected they would take Madras rupees in part of *dadni* at the usual *batta* but they represented that they would be great sufferers by it as the government would oblige them to pay a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and that they would be at further loss in 'putting them off'. The Council knew well that the only remedy was to seek the help of the Jagat Seths in the matter. So it asked the broker to 'solicit his [Fatechand's] interest for the currency of them [Madras rupees] again'. Fatechand Seth was shrewd enough to tell the English broker that 'the French had been the sole occasion of our complaint by agreeing to pay a custom on Madras and Arcot rupees and that it was not in his power to be of any service to us he himself not being exempted from this custom'. But it was ultimately he who came to the rescue of the Company and told the broker that he was willing to take $106\frac{1}{2}$ Madras rupees for 100 *siccas* which was half per cent more than 'we could Put them

off for anywhere else'.[169] Throughout the period, however, the Company tried to coerce the merchants to take part of their *dadni* in Madras and Arcot rupees. The Kasimbazar Council reported in 1752 that it had paid their merchants with Madras rupees at 106 rupees per 100 *siccas* which was 'the lowest batta they could take them at, and at which rate there is a less loss arising to the Company than on any other sort'.[170]

Intra-Asiatic and Freight Trade

Though the local credit market eased to a great extent the Company's problem of shortage of working capital, it often tried to augment its resources by engaging in Intra-Asiatic and freight trade as also borrowing from the servants of the European Companies including its own. The Intra-Asiatic trade and freight voyages not only provided additional sources of funds for invesment but also saved the Company the demurrage for its ships lying idle in Bengal. The Dutch and the French too did the same. The ships which failed to sail for Europe in the proper season were obliged to stay on, thus incurring heavy demurrage. Under the circumstances the Companies asked their servants to use their best efforts to employ these ships in Intra-Asiatic commerce and freight trade. These commercial ventures certainly helped the Companies to some extent to solve the problem of shortage of liquid capital, though in the absence of adequate data it is not possible to make any accurate estimate of the proceeds from such ventures. Only occasional references to the earnings of some of the ships are to be found in the records. In the first two decades of the eighteenth century the Intra-Asiatic trade was mostly in the Bengal-Surat-Persia sector. This trend was continued in the rest of our period though the trade to Surat declined a bit from about the early thirties. The Indian and Armenian merchants at Hughli and Calcutta often freighted European ships for particular voyage to Surat or Persia either jointly or on their separate account, especially in the first two decades of the 18th century.[171] A few illustrations of the Intra-Asiatic and freight voyages will give an indication of the earnings from such endeavour. It was reported in January 1728 that the ship *Hertford* 'being ordered a country voyage' sailed for Surat 'with a tolerable

good freight'.[173] In the preceding year ship *Sarum's* earnings on a voyage to Surat produced only Rs. 18,550, 'Surat almost being ruined by country Government'.[175] Consequent to the prospects of a poor freight, the ship *Compton* was let out in October 1728 for a freight voyage to Jeddah for a sum of Rs. 20,000 which was proportionate to the sum for which *Walpole* was let out the previous year.[174] The Calcutta Council reported in 1737 that the earning of *Halifax's* voyage to Surat was Rs. 48,304.[175] In November 1754 the Company let out ship *St. George* to Captain Rannie for Rs. 40,000.[176]

But even in Intra-Asiatic trade and freight voyages the Company had to face various difficulties. The English Company had to compete with other European Companies and Muslim shipowners. As other European Companies, mainly the Dutch and the French, were also engaged in Intra-Asiatic trade, the English Company had to face their rivalry. In freight trade, the main competitors were the French and Muslims. The Calcutta Council reported in 1727 that two Muslim ships arrived from Surat and the super cargoes told the merchants at Murshidabad that their ships were safer than those of the English who were then at war with Angria. They further informed the merchants that they would carry goods 'at half freight and no expence in boat hire'. And they secured most of the freight goods.[177] Next year the Council wrote that the Muslim ships 'have run away with the major parts of the freights at Rs. 4 and 4½ per maund'. It further added that 'were the English to lower theirs to 4 Rupees per maund the Moors would still sink under even to 1 Rupee per maund because [they] can afford to take less'.[178] In July that year the Council noted that the ship *Compton* could be set up for a freight voyage to Surat but 'cannot expect many freight Bales because the French and Moors take in Bales at ½ freight'.[179] In 1729 a French Captain came to Bengal in a large Muslim ship with a French pass and 'has got the major part of the freight by agreeing for it at Surat at an under rate'.[180] The Court of Directors too pointed out the lowering of earnings from freight trade, especially to Surat, because of the 'badness of Trade, and the low freights which the Moors ships carrying goods for who sailing at much less charge than our shipping can afford to do'.[181]

Borrowing from Europeans

The English Company also borrowed from local Europeans including servants of various European Companies, free merchants and ships' Captains. These short-term borrowings which were really bridging finance did to some extent ease the Company's problem of cash shortage for investments in the proper season. In the early decades of the eighteenth century the Company's servants deposited money with the Company against bills of exchange on the Court of Directors to be paid in England As for example, Abraham Adams, the accountant at Calcutta, deposited Rs. 27,728 at Calcutta against a bill of exchange on the Court prior to his departure for England in 1716.[182] Even the Presidents of the Fort William Council remitted money to England by this method. Thus we find Robert Hedges, the President in Bengal, transferred Rs. 40,045 by means of a bill on the Court in 1717.[183] Samuel Feake, the next President, received a bill on the Court for his deposits amounting to Rs. 10,000 in 1718.[184] In the same year Henry Frankland who was the export warehousekeeper paid a sum of Rs. 80,000 into the Company's treasury in Calcutta for which he received a bill of exchange on the Court for £ 11,000,[185] As a matter of fact the Company borrowed money locally from the Europeans in Bengal almost throughout the period under review, though it is difficult to compute the amount borrowed yearly by the Company. However, an idea of the amount borrowed from the Europeans could be given for some particular years. In the period of one year from June 1746 to May 1747 the English Company borrowed from the Europeans Rs. 475,640 while next year, from June 1747 to May 1748, the amount borrowed was Rs. 510,967.[186]

Summing up...

To sum up, it can be said with little doubt that the European Companies were able to solve, though with some difficulty, the problems facing them in securing their investments in Bengal. This will be evident from the increasing volume of the European trade during the period under review. The Companies tried to solve their

main problem in procuring investments — the acute shortage of working capital — by recourse to borrowing from local credit market which was highly efficient and well organized, and this local money market was the main source of borrowings of the Companies. They also borrowed from local Europeans including their servants and free merchants, and tried to augment their finances by earnings from Intra-Asiatic trade and freight voyages. The main obstacles in borrowing from local capital market were the tradition of short-term loan extending not beyond a few months generally, the occasional scarcity of money in the market and the high rate of interest. The Companies could hardly modify this traditional system. The interest rate was, however, lowered but that was surely granted as a grace rather than anything else by the house of Jagat Seths. They faced various problems in converting the bullion and failed to procure any minting privilege. Neither could they sell the imported bullion and specie in the open market nor could they freely impose the Madras and Arcot rupees on the merchants and markets. In all these they were hindered and harassed by the Jagat Seths who were the most powerful economic force in Bengal under the patronage of the nawabs. Thus the Companies could do little to change even the small detail in the traditional commercial organization. The only new element, if any, that they could introduce in the traditional system was perhaps the office of broker or Chief merchant. Though the brokers were not unknown in the traditional organization of commerce, the role played by the brokers of the European Companies in the commercial and social life was something new in the traditional system. The brokers of these Companies were altogether a new institution in the commercial life of the country, quite different from the traditional Indian broker in their functions and importance. The other new elements introduced by the Europeans were mainly in the field of organization of trade and procurement system which will be discussed in a later paper. It is also interesting to note that a study of the European Investments gives us an insight, however inadequate, into the working of the complex structure of traditional commercial organization, credit machinery and capital market, and the mercantile class in the pre-Colonial period.

Manuscript Sources and Abbreviations

B. P. C.—Bengal Public Consultations, India Office Library and Records (IOLR)

O. C. —Original Correspondence, IOLR

V. O. C.—Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (earlier K. A.—Koliaal Archief), Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague

D. B. —Despatch Book, IOLR

C & B. Abstr. —Coust and Bay Abstracts, IOLR

Hume's Memorie—The Memorie of Alexander Hume, 1730, Stadsarchief Antwerp, General Indische Compagnie, 5769

Orme Mss. —Orme Manuscripts, IOLR

Fact. Records—Factory Records, Calcutta, Dacca, Kasimbazar, IOLR

NAI —National Archives of India

Beng. Letters Recd.—Bengal Letters Received, IOLR

NOTES

1. The term 'investment' is used here in the same sense as that in which the companies used to denote their purchases in India.
2. S. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1975, p. 144; John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 1672-81, Vol. 1. London, 1909, p. 217; J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, London, 1929, p. 401
3. It was reported that Vithaldas Parekh paid Rs. 100.000 to become the broker of the Company at Surat. Another broker, Rustomjee Maneckjee, paid Rs. 20,000 as customary present to the English Company, *vide*, O C. 7222, para 48, Vol. 58, 14 Sept. 1700. The Bengal factors reported in 1703 that 'it was never the custom here in Bengal for brokers to buy their places', *vide*, O. C. 8110, Vol. 65, 25 Jan. 1703
4. For a detailed study of the Seths of Calcutta, See, Benoy Ghose, 'Some Old Family Founders in the 18th Century Calcutta', *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. 79, pp. 42-55
5. Factory Records, Calcutta, Vol. 2, pt. I, f. 133
6. Ibid., Vol. 3, pt. II, f. 90
7. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 2, f. 189a
8. For details of the Court's allegations against Janardan Seth, see, S. Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 145
9. D. B., Vol. 98, f. 106, 13 Jan. 1714

10. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 2, f, 189a; C & B Abst., Vol. 1, f. 342
11. D. B., Vol. 99, f. 189, 15 Feb. 1716
12. Ibid., Vol. 98, f. 462, 12 Jan. 1715
13. Quoted in Benoy Ghose, *op. cit.*, p. 47
14. C & B. Abst., Vol. 1, f. 472
15. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 30, ff. 26a, 31a ; C & B. Abstr. Vol. 2, f. 28
16. D. B., Vol. 99, ff. 76-77, 18 Jan. 1717
17. C & B. Abstr. Vol. 2, f. 175, para 57, 6 Dec. 1718
18. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 79, para 42, 27 Nov. 1716
19. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 175, para 58, 6 Dec. 1718
20. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 276, para 72, 28 Dec. 1720
21. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, ff. 46-46a ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 175, para 59, 6 Dec. 1718
22. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, ff. 236-37, para 82, 29 Nov. 1719 ; f. 320, para 60, 31 Jan. 1722
23. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 237, para 83, 29 Nov. 1719
24. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 320, para 60, 31 Jan. 1722
25. D. B., Vol. 101, f. 463, para 36, 14 Feb. 1723
26. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 437, para 53, 9 Jan. 1725. On 6 Dec. 1718 the Bengal Council referred to Bishnudas as a weak brother of the family, the most unqualified, vide, C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 172, para 35. But Benoy Ghose holds that Bishnudas was son of Janardan and nephew of Baranashi Seth, *vide*, Benoy Ghose, *op. cit.*, p. 49
27. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 5, f. 568, 9 Nov. 1724
28. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 586, para 54, 28 Jan. 1728
29. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 419, 21 July 1731
30. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, ff. 434, 434a, Annex to Consult. 9 Aug. 1731
31. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 434a, Annex to Consult. 9 Aug. 1731
32. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, ff. 435-36, Annex to Consult. 9 Aug. 1731, It is surprising that K. N. Chaudhuri completely ignored this report which throws interesting sidelight on the working of the *dadni* system.
33. B. P. C , Range 1, Vol. 9, f. 9-9a, 13 March 1732 ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 3, f. 233, para 4, 26 June 1732. Benoy Ghose (*op. cit.*, p. 49) holds that Samsundar was Bishnudas' eldest son but a Fort William General (C & B Abstr., Vol. 2, para, 82, 29 Nov. 1719) mentions categorically that Samsundar was Baranashi's son.
34. D B., Vol. 106, f. 182, para 38, 29 Jan. 1734
35. D B., Vol. 106, f. 183, para 41, 29 Jan. 1734

36. C & B., Abstr., Vol. 4, ff. 66-67, para 52, 24 Jan. 1735
37. D. B., Vol. 107, ff. 414-15, para 17, 19, 21, 2 Feb. 1738
38. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 13, f. 429a, 20 Dec. 1738 ; f. 456a, 17 Jan. 1739
39. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 13, f. 434, 23 Dec. 1738
40. For the Council's reasons for confirming Samsundar Seth, see, C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 308, para 99, 24 Dec. 1739
41. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 13, f. 324a, 14 Aug. 1738
42. C & B., Abstr., Vol. 4, ff. 285-86, paras 108-9, 29 Jan. 1739
43. D. B., Vol. 108, f. 155, para 95, 21 March 1740
44. D. B., Vol. 108, f. 155, para 96-97, 21 March 1740
45. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 348, para 160, 3 Jan. 1741
46. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 372, para 4, 26 July 1741
47. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 379, para 98, 11 Dec. 1741
48. Orme Mss., India VI, f. 1513, Letter of Captain Fenwick on Company's affairs in Bengal.
49. D. B., Vol. III, f. 537, para 38, 24 Jan. 1753
50. For this change over and motives behind it, see my forthcoming article in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, February 1988
51. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 428, para 62, 3 Sept. 1753 ; Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 22, ff. 428-29 ; *FWIHC*, Vol. 1, p. 692
52. D. B., Vol. 112, f. 214, para 48, 23 Jan. 1755
53. For Kantu's affair, see, B.P.C., Range 1, Vol. 8, ff 203-3a, 219, 226a, 234-34a, 236a, 237, 248-48a, 249-49a, 256, 257-60
54. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 257, 10 July 1730
55. Cotton piece-good.
56. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 203, 28 April 1730
57. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 249-49a, 22 June 1730
58. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 248a, 22 June 1730
59. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 298, 5 Oct. 1730
60. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, f. 321, 7 Dec. 1730
61. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 5, Consult. 5 Feb. 21 Feb. 19 March 1737 ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 210, para 4, 15 Feb. 1737 ; B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 12, f. 162, 16 April 1737
62. Ibid., Vol. 6, Consult. 16 Sept. 1742
63. Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 21, ff. 283-84, 10 Jan. 1748 ; B.P.C., Range 1, Vol 19, f. 239, 15 May 1747 ; *FWIHC*, Vol. 1, p. 232

64. Hume's Memoirs. I am gratefully indebted to Prof. K. N. Chaudhuri for allowing me to make a photocopy of this document from his own Copy of the same.

65. Ibid.

66. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 2, Consult. 27 Jan. 1738

67. D.B., 28 Jan. 1659, Vol. 84, f. 411. The shipping season in Bengal was generally from September to January.

68. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, f. 274a, 18 Aug. 1720

69. B: P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, ff. 404a-405, 29 May 1721

70. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, f. 432, 8 Aug. 1721

71. S. Chaudhuri, *op cit.*, p. 114. or the Company's borrowings and debts in Calcutta and Kasimbazar in the first two decades of the 18th century, see, ibid, pp. 114-116. One lakh is one hundred thousand.

72. D. B., Vol. 101, f. 372, para 32, 21 Dec. 1722 ; C & B.. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 117, para 261, 10 Jan. 1748

73. V. O. C., 2030, ff. 156-158, 16 March 1725 ; all fractions rounded to nearest figure.

74. One wonders why—was it because the Katmas were the most influential merchant and trader family (specialised in money lending and trade in silk, silk piece goods) ?

75. The house used to lend money in the name of Jagath Seth but sometimes also in the name of and referred to as Manickchand and Anandchand, or simply Anandchand.

76. The same Balai Katma – the Company's broker, see Section on Kasimbazar broker.

77. Satu might have been the same as Hatu, in, Kasimbazar broker section.

78. Taking only amount exceeding Rs. 30,000

79. Hume's Memoires

80. Indrani Ray, 'Some Aspects of French Presence in Bengal, 1731-40', *Calcutta Historical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 1976, p. 99

81. Ibid , pp. 100-101

82. J. H. Little, *The House of Jagat Seth*, Calcutta, 1967, p. X (Introduction by N. K. Sinha); see also Kantu Papers. B.P.C., Range 1, f. 256, Annexure to Consult. 29 June 1730

83. Computed from V.O.C. 2874

84. J. H. Little, *op cit*, p XI, Introduction by N. K Sinha

85 Orme Mss., India VI, f. 1525 ; Watts' letter to Clive, 18 Feb. 1757, quoted in S. C. Hill, *Bengal in* 1756-57, Vol. II, London, 1905, p. 229

86. B. P. C., Vol 6, f. 564a, 12 March 1728

87. D. B., Vol. 105, ff. 688-89, para 100, 6 Feb. 1733 ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 3, para 86, f. 345, 2 Dec. 1733. At the rate of 2s 6d per rupee, the Company paid an interest of Rs. 32,000 at the rate of 12 per cent interest at Kasimbazar in the year 1731-32

88. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 59, para 18, 11 Aug. 1745

89. Fact. Records, Dacca, Consult. 8 Sept. 1749

90. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 16, f. 177, 6 June 1743

91. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 16, ff. 184a, 203a, 13 June 1743

92. For a detailed study of the rise and growth of the banking house of the Jagat Seths and the role of these Seths in the economic and political life of Bengal, see my forthcoming article in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Feb. 1988. This house was not related to the Seths of Calcutta.

93. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 2, Consult. 30 July 1746

94. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 7, 15 April 1746 ; 22 Aug. 1748

95. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 10, Consult. 11 Nov. 1751

96. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 15, f. 84a, 29 March 1742

97. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 3, f. 345, para 86, 26 Dec. 1733

98. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 14, ff. 317, 317a, 11 Dec. 1740, f. 337, 26 Dec. 1740

99. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 14, f. 338, 26 Dec. 1740

100. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 6, Consult. 5 Feb. 1741

101. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 6, Consult. 24 April 1743

102. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 5, Consult. 26 March 1733

103. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 5, Consult. 14 June 1733

104. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 17, ff. 106-6a, 17 May 1744

105. This Anandchand, and Manickchand Anandchand definitely refer to the house of Jagat Seths, *c.f*, V.O.C. 2849 (K.A. 2741), f. 128

106. Factory Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 6, Consult. 24 April 1743

107. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 3, Consult. 19 April 1750

108. Agency house, subordinate office.

109. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 236, 15 May 1746

110. Daroga of the customs houses. Jan Karseboom, the chief of the Dutch Company in Bengal, describes Hakim Beg in 1755 as 'Daroga van de Pansjoutra of tholpluatsen' (Daroga of Pachotra or Tallplaces [custom houses]), and'een grote favoriet van den Nawab' (a great favourite of the Nawab), V.O.C. 2862 (K.A.) 2754, ff. 125vo, 127vo

111. He emerged as the key figure in the Nawab's relations with the English Company when Alivardi gave him the charge of the nawab's relations with the Europeans in Bengal in 1750. B. P. C. Range 1, Vol. 23, f. 306a, 25 Aug. 1750

112. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 10, 10 Oct. 1751 ; Vol. 11, 2 Dec. 1751

113. Computed from Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vols. 9, 10, 12

114. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 12, Consult. 4 May 1753 ; 31 May 1754

115. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 3, 9 Nov. 1749 ; B.P.C., Range 1, Vol. 22, f. 420a, 15 Nov. 1749

116. For this, see my forthcoming article in *JESHO*.

117. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 22, f. 338-338a, 20 Oct. 1749

118. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 23, f. 303a, 25 Aug. 1750

119. Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 22, f. 117 ; Home Misc. (NAI), Vol. 16, p. 189, para 83, Letters to Court, Feb. 1751 ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 275

120. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 7, Consult. 22 June 1746 ; B, P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 265a, 30 June 1746

121. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 272, 7 July 1746

122. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 302a, 29 July 1746

123. Fact. Records, Calcutta, Vol. 10, pt. II, f. 92

124. D. B., Vol. 95, f. 519, 18 Jan. 1705

125. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 2, Consult. 19 August 1746

126. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol, 18, f. 354a, 5 Sept. 1746

127. Fact. Records, Dacca, Vol. 2, Consult. 16 Sept. 1746

128. B. P. C.. Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 391a, 12 Oct. 1746

129. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 408, 16 Oct. 1746

130. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 434, 11 Nov. 1746

131. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 20, f. 76a, 31 July 1747

132. B. P. C , Range 1, Vol. 20, f. 235a, 24 Nov. 1747

133. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 20, f. 283a, 28 Dec. 1747

134. Home Misc. (NAI), Vol. 13, f. 85, para 70, Letter to Court, 10 Jan. 1748 ; Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 21, f. 237 ; *FWIHC*, Vol. 1., pp. 203-4

135. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 321, para 77, 31 Jan. 1722

136. D. B., Vol. 101, f. 162, para 56, 16 Feb. 1722

137. Hume's Memoire

138. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 336, para 124, 3 June 1741

139. B. P. C., Range 1. Vol. 15, f. 334a, 19 Oct. 1742

140. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 430, para 8, 30 Jan. 1743 ; B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 16, f. 92, 29 March 1743

141. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 399, 12 Feb. 1753 ; Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 22, ff. 384-85, 8 Feb. 1753

142. Public Letters to Court (NAI), S. No. 6, f. 25, para 60, Bengal General Letter to the Court of Directors. 29 Dec. 1759

143. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 69, para 14, 4 Feb. 1746 ; f. 80, para 66, 30 Nov. 1746 ; B. P. C., Vol. 24, f. 49, 31 Jan. 1751. Occasionally however Umichand and some of the substantial *dadni* merchants were paid in bullion as is evident from the records of the Company.

144. Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 21, ff. 49-50, para 66, 30 Nov. 1746

145. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 175, para 62, 6 Dec. 1718 ; Vol. 4, f. 454, para 46, Feb. 1744

146. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 16, ff. 272a-273a, 19 Sept. 1743

147. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol 16, f. 332a, 9 Nov, 1743

148. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol 16. ff. 332a-333, 9 Nov. 1743

149. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 16, f. 333, 9 Nov. 1743

150. Fact. Records. Kasimb., Vol. 6, Consult. 18 Nov. 1743.

151. D. B., Vol 108, f. 288, para 15, 7 Feb. 1745.

152. D. B., Vol. 109, f. 463, para 19, 7 May, 6 & 12 June 1746

153. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol 17, f. 604, 13 June 1745

154. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, ff. 265a-266, 30 June 1746

155. B. P. C., Range, 1, Vol. 18, f. 394, 14 Oct. 1746

156. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 398, 15 Oct. 1746

157. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 431 8 Nov. 1746

158. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 18, f. 431a, 8 Nov. 1746

159. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 19, f. 292a, 23 June 1747 ; Beng. Letters Recd ; Vol. 21, f. 285, 10 Jan, 1748 ; *FWIHC*, p. 233

160. Beng. Letters Recd., Vol. 21, ff. 289-90, para 195, 10 Jan. 1748 ; B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 20, f. 187a, 9 Oct. 1747 ; *FWIHC*, Vol. 1, p. 236

161. B. P. C. Range 1, Vol. 21, ff. 198a-200a, 22 Sept, 1748

162. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 23, f. 356a, 20 Oct. 1750 ; C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 278, paras 126, 127, 4 Feb. 1751 ; *FWIHC*, Vol. 1, pp. 482-83

163. C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 175 para 61, 6 Dec. 1718

164. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 8, ff, 451a-452, 13 Sept, 1731 ; C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 3, f. 172, para 2, 5 Jan, 1732

165. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 198, para 60, 29 Jan. 1737

166. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 2, Consult. 20 March 1738 ; B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 13, f. 216, 3 April 1738

167. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 23, f. 28, 11 Jan. 1750

168. Fact. Records, Kasimbazar, Vol. 11, 31 Jan. 1752 ; C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 5, f. 357, para 79, 18 Sept. 1752

169. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 13, ff. 183-83a, 2 March 1738

170. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 5 f. 356 ; B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 25, f. 162, 8 June 1752 ; *FWIHC*, Vol., f. 602

171. For English Company's Intra-Asiatic trade, and Freight voyages by Indian and Armenian merchants in early 18th century, see, S. Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-25

172. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 583, para 18, 28 Jan. 1728

173. D. B., Vol. 104, ff. 420-21, para 6, 21 Feb. 1729 ; C & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, f. 583, para 19, 28 Jan. 1728

174. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 6, f. 656, 7 Oct. 1728

175. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 4, f. 233, 30 Nov. 1737

176. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 27, f. 334, 7 Nov. 1754

177. C. & B. Abstr., Vol. 2, ff. 524-25, para 15, 28 Jan. 1727

178. C. & B. Abstr.. Vol. 2, ff. 583, para 18, 28 Jan. 1728

179. Ibid., Vol. 3, f. 26, para 18, 31 July 1728

180. Ibid., Vol. 3, f. 30, para 16, 2 Feb. 1729

181. D. B., Vol. 104, ff. 420-21, para 6, 21 Feb. 1729

182. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 3, f. 117

183. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 3, f. 460

184. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, f. 1a

185. B. P. C., Range 1, Vol. 4, f. 3

186. Computed from relevant volumes of B. P. C., Range 1.

BOOK-REVIEW

THE CRISIS OF EMPIRE OR A REORIENTATION OF POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN MUGHAL NORTH INDIA ?

Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, Awadh and *The Punjab*, 1707-1748, O. U. P., Delhi, 1986, Rs. 175, pp. 365.

This book is an important intervention in the ongoing debate about the crisis of the Mughal Empire. The author has made a refreshing departure from those historians, who have provided a coherent but 'economistic' interpretation of the decline of the Mughal empire. But he has done more than that. With his impeccable command over source-materials written in Persian, he has produced a thorough-going analysis of the rise of the *Nawabi* rule in Awadh, and probably with less success, provided an interpretation of the failure of similar attempts in Punjab.

The structure of the book is simple. The author has sought to focus on 'the interplay of the forces of the centre and the region in two north Indian provinces' (p. 11). He has taken up specifically two provinces to underline the contrast. In Awadh, the governor was able "to place nawabi rule on ground". In Punjab the new *Subadari* collapsed. Thus, he has arranged all his chapters along these lines. First, he has discussed, at one level, the policy of imperial control vis-a-vis the regional problems. Secondly, at another level, he has concentrated on the internal developments, conflicts and adjustments of various local forces in *Awadh* and Punjab.

Except in one significant respect, Muzaffar Alam has not said anything new about the imperial control vis-a-vis regions. Following the line of the researches laid down by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, A. L. Srivastava and H. R. Gupta, he has shown how initially the nobles, entrenched at the Court politics, would extend their power at the province. Later, the nobles, having roots in the provinces, would try to meddle in the imperial politics at the Centre, in order to make their positions secure. In his opinion, this shift is the quintessence of the politics in the first half of the eighteenth century India (pp 16-17). He has argued that this shift took place through four distinct stages, and emphasised the well-known factors, such as

problem of faction-fighting within the nobility, financial mismanagement and problems regarding allotment of *Jagirs*. He has also underscored the political significance of the legitimacy conferred by the Mughal Court on the regional up-starts. All these are, however, well-known and Muzaffar Alam has restated them coherently. But he has made a telling point in the course of his arguments. That this political re-alignment had its connection with "the failures in the spheres of production and market" is "far from obvious" (p. 9). He has not found any perceptible 'agrarian crisis' in the first half of the eighteenth century. Both Punjab and Awadh were economically prosperous provinces. In Awadh particularly, establishment of prosperous towns, growth of new *bazars* and extension of cultivation were the order of the day. The *jama* figure rose at a high rate and the *hasil* figure roughly corresponded (pp. 252-254). The situation in Punjab was also not worse till the 1720s. Hence, the failure of imperial court was due more to political factors than to economic crisis. He has also pointed out that the rationale behind the agrarian uprising did not lie in the simple paradigm of poverty, oppression, and resistance. It may well be located in the aspirations of prosperous, politically articulate regional and local groups.

Muzaffar Alam is, at his best, in the analysis of the developments in Awadh. He has mapped out the clan lineages of the zamindar groups in different areas. In a section, full of rich information, he has shown how the *madad-i-ma'ash* or revenue grantees gradually developed their own hereditary interests in various localities and how they clashed with the locally entrenched old zamindar families. In this situation, Burhan-ul-Mulk and his successors came to terms with these local elements and extended the social base of the *nawabi* rule. In the context of a prosperous region, the governor combined the power of the *diwan* and the *fauzdars* under his control, appointed a number of *amils* in the Jagirs and at the same time, reconciled the *zamindars* through a contract (ta 'a hud) which had given them greater autonomy in their local administration. In this re-arrangement *ijara* assumed a new significance. Ijara was an answer to the problems arising out of the distribution of revenue resources among the magnates. By assuring a steady income to the assignees or grantees on the one hand and by involving many local elements in the process of revenue collection on the other, *ijara*

became an element of stabilisation in the *nawabi* rule (pp. 38-42, 206-207). This new interpretation is certainly thought-provoking. Also, the rise of the *Awadhi* elements like the Afghan soldiers in Allahabad, became a potential source of support for the new *nawabi* rule.

In his discussion on developments in Punjab, the author is on a less solid ground. His discussion of the opposition of the *Khatri* to the movement led by Banda and the tensions generated within the Sikh polity in the wake of the revolt is fascinating. But in Punjab, he has mainly focussed on "the breakdown of the institution of communication" (*Waqai* and *Sawanih*). It is not very clear why the governor failed to strike a deal with local elements. Or rather, Muzaffar has refused to pursue the leads which he has himself indicated in his discussion.

And here lies his weakness. He has talked of "a sense of regional identity" in Awadh and of the growth of "an increasingly important community" (Sic) in Punjab. He has underlined the necessity of understanding "the tripolar" relations involving the *jagirdars* or ruling magnates, zamindars and the *Khudkashts*. But, he never seriously ventured beyond the horizon of zamindars and instead, used some empty phrases like 'dysfunctional' to cover up his theoretical weakness. What does the term 'regional identity' mean in that context of the culture of Awadh ? Mclead has shown how a sense of community had developed in Punjab. R. P. Rana has pointed out the variations in the rural revolts, where the 'tripolarity' of the relations operated differently in different cases. Muzaffar has not taken sufficient notice of these researches.

But the book would serve as a sound basis for future research. Muzaffar has clearly shown, in terms of information and details, how rewarding research on the first half of eighteenth century would be, if one possesses a firm grasp over Persian and Urdu sources. He has also demonstrated how, in the light of eighteenth century developments, many generalisations, based on the seventeenth century experiences, need substantial modifications. In fact, Muzaffar's book has aroused some doubts and provoked some questions. Frankly, we are eagerly awaiting his next monograph.

GAUTAM BHADRA

ĀCHĀRYA-VANDANĀ

D. R. Bhandarkar Birth Centenary Volume

(Released by the Late Indira Gandhi, Former Prime Minister of India)

EDITOR : DR. SAMARESH BANDYOPADHYAY

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The volume has been given the title *Acharya-Vandana,* meant as it is to pay homage to *Acharya* Devadatta Ramkrishna Bhandarkar (1875-1950) on the occasion of his birth centenary. It contains two parts, besides a *prasasti* on Bhandarkar in Sanskrit in the beginning and an Index at the end.

Part I (pp. 1-124), entitled 'Devadatta Ramkrishna Bhandarkar' has four sections. Section I incorporates three articles on the academic career and contribution of the great savant. Section 2 which has an appendix is devoted to reminiscences on and tributes paid to that remarkable personality by twenty persons, of whom some were his colleagues and some his students. Section 3 running to nearly twenty pages in print attempts to enlist the prolific writer's published writings and section 4 brings to a point the warmth with which the outstanding scholar's centenary was celebrated.

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CORRIGENDUM

The name of Professor Bharati Ray, M. A., Ph. D., has been mistakenly omitted from the list of Editorial Board of this journal in this number. The omission is regretted.

Editor.

FORM IV

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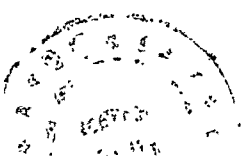

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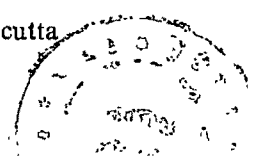

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